All Glories to Sri Guru and Gauranga

Sri Guru and His Grace



by
His Divine Grace
Bhakti Raksak Srila Sridhar Dev-Goswami

Preface

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kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya
vande guroh sri-caranaravindam

"In the revealed scriptures it is declared that the spiritual master should be worshiped like the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this injunction is obeyed by pure devotees of the Lord. The spiritual master is the most confidential servant of the Lord. Thus let us offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of our spiritual master."



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Gentlemen, on behalf of the members of the Bombay branch of the Gaudiya Math, let me welcome you all because you have so kindly joined us tonight in our congregational offerings of homage to the lotus feet of the world teacher, acaryadeva, who is the founder of this Gaudiya Mission and is the President acarya of Sri Sri Visva Vaisnava Raja Sabha - I mean my eternal divine master, Om Visnupada Paramahamsa Parivrajakacarya, Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja.

Sixty two years ago, on this auspicious day, the acaryadeva made his appearance by the call of Thakura Bhaktivinoda at Sri Ksetra, Jagannatha Dhama at Puri.

Gentlemen, the offering of such an homage as has been arranged this evening to the acaryadeva is not a sectarian concern, for when we speak of the fundamental principle of gurudeva or acaryadeva, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my guru from yours or anyone else's. There is only one guru, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me and all others.

In the Mundaka Upanisad (1.2.12) it is said:

tad vijnartham sa gurum eva bhigacchet

samit panih srotriyam brahma nistham

"In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the Absolute Truth." Thus it has been enjoined herewith that in order to receive that transcendental knowledge, one must approach the guru. Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the guru cannot be two. The acaryadeva to whom we have assembled tonight to

offer our humble homage is not the guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the jagad guru, or the guru of all of us; the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

In the Bhagavatam (11.17.27) it is said:

acaryam mam vijaniyan

navamanyeta karhicit

na martya buddhyasuyeta

sarva deva mayo guruh

"One should understand the spiritual master to be as good as I am," said the Blessed Lord. "Nobody should be jealous of the spiritual master or think of him as an ordinary man, because the spiritual master is the sum total of all demigods." That is, the acarya has been identified with God Himself. He has nothing to do with the affairs of this mundane world. He appears before us to reveal the light of the Vedas and to bestow upon us the blessing of full-fledged freedom, after which we should hanker at every step of our life's journey.

The transcendental knowledge of the Vedas was first uttered by God to Brahma, the creator of this particular universe. From Brahma the knowledge descended to Narada, from Narada to Vyasadeva, from Vyasadeva to Madhva, and in this process of disciplic succession the transcendental knowledge was transmitted by one disciple to another till it reached Lord Gauranga, Sri Krsna Caitanya, who posed as the disciple and successor of Sri Isvara Puri. The present acaryadeva is the tenth disciplic representative from Sri Rupa Goswami, the original representative of Lord Caitanya who preached this transcendental tradition in its fullness. The knowledge that we receive from our gurudeva is not different from that imparted by God Himself and the succession of the acaryas in the preceptorial line of Brahma. We adore this auspicious day as Sri Vyasa-puja-tithi because the acarya is the living representative of Vyasadeva, the divine compiler of the Vedas, Puranas, Bhagavad-gita, Mahabharata and Srimad-Bhagavatam.

We cannot know anything of the transcendental region by our limited, perverted method of observation and experiment. But all of us can lend our eager ears for the aural reception of the transcendental sound transmitted from that region to

this, through the unadulterated medium of sri gurudeva or Sri Vyasadeva. Therefore, gentlemen, we should surrender ourselves today at the feet of the representative of Sri Vyasadeva for the elimination of all our differences bred by our unsubmissive attitude. It is accordingly said in the Bhagavad-gita (4.34):

tad viddhi pranipatena

pariprasnena sevaya

upadeksyanti te jnanam

jnaninas tattva darsinah

"Just approach the wise and bona fide spiritual master. Surrender unto him first and try to understand him by inquiries and service. Such a wise spiritual master will enlighten you with transcendental knowledge, for he has already known the Absolute Truth."

To receive transcendental knowledge, we must completely surrender ourselves to the real acarya in a spirit of ardent inquiry and service.

Actual performance of service to the Absolute under the guidance of the acarya is the only vehicle by which we can assimilate transcendental knowledge. Today's meeting for offering our humble services and homage to the feet of the acaryadeva will enable us to be favored with the capacity of assimilating the transcendental knowledge so kindly transmitted by him to all persons without distinction.

Gentlemen, although it is imperfectly that we have been enabled, by his grace, to understand the sublime messages of our acaryadeva, we must admit that we have realized definitely that the divine message from his holy lips is the congenial thing for suffering humanity. All of us should hear him patiently. If we listen to the transcendental sound without unnecessary opposition, he will surely have mercy upon us.

The acarya's message is to take us back to our original home, back to God. Let me repeat, therefore, that we should hear him patiently, follow him in the measure of our convictionand bow down at his lotus feet for releasing us from our present causeless unwillingness for serving the Absolute and all souls.

Sitting at the feet of the acaryadeva, let us try to understand from this transcendental source of knowledge what we are, what is this universe, what is God, and what is our relationship with Him. The message of Lord Caitanya is the message for the living entities and the message of the living world. Lord Caitanya did not bother himself for the upliftment of this dead world, which is suitably named Martyaloka, the world where everything is destined to die. He appeared before us four hundred and fifty years ago to tell us something of the transcendental universe, where everything is permanent and everything is for the service of the Absolute. But recently Lord Caitanya has been misrepresented by some unscrupulous persons, and the highest philosophy of the Lord has been misinterpreted to be the cult of the lowest type of society. We are glad to announce tonight that our acaryadeva, with his usual kindness, saved us from this horrible type of degradation, and therefore we bow down at his lotus feet with all humility.

We are happy that we have been relieved of this horrible type of malady by the mercy of His Divine Grace. He is our eye-opener, our eternal father, our eternal preceptor and our eternal guide. Let us therefore bow down at his lotus feet on this auspicious day.

Gentlemen, although we are like ignorant children in the knowledge of Transcendence, still, my gurudeva has kindled a small fire within us to dissipate the invincible darkness of empirical knowledge. We are now so much on the safe side that no amount of philosophical argument by the empiric schools of thought can deviate us an inch from the position of our eternal dependence on the lotus feet of His Divine Grace.

Gentlemen, had he not appeared before us to deliver us from the thralldom of this gross, worldly delusion, surely we should have remained for lives and ages in the darkness of helpless captivity. Had he not appeared before us, we would not have been able to understand the eternal truth of the sublime teaching of Lord Caitanya.

Personally, I have no hope for any direct service of the coming crores of births in the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from this mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus feet of my divine master to allow me to suffer the lot for which I am destined due to my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection: that I am nothing but a

tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead, realized through the unflinching mercy of my divine master. Let me therefore bow down at his lotus feet with all the humility at my command.

Abhay Charan Das (Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad) For Members, Sri Gaudiya Math

Bombay

- This lecture was originally published in The Harmonist in 1936, on the advent day of Om Visnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura.

Introduction

by

His Divine Grace B. R. Srila Sridhar Dev-Goswami

To err is human. To err is inevitable for all, being not perfect. Still, no one wants to remain imperfect. There is an element within all that is animate that tends towards perfection. If it were not so, we would feel no want at all. Our tendency towards perfection is certainly very weak and limited; otherwise we could attain the goal at once. Our limited capacity and tendency for perfection makes room for the guide or guru. The imperfect is not so if it is not in need of help, and that also from beyond itself. The perfect is not perfect if He cannot assert Himself or help others, and that too, of His own accord. So the guidance to perfection or Absolute Truth is necessarily a function of the absolute Himself, and the divine agent through whom this function manifests is Sri Guru or the divine guide.

For a seeker of the Absolute Truth, submission to the guru is unavoidable. A class of thinkers believes, however, that when scientific research is possible, why cannot higher spiritual knowledge also be evolved from within? Such people are ignorant of the most essential nature of absolute Knowledge, that He alone is the Absolute Subject and all else including ourselves constitutionally stand only as an object to His omniscient vision. It is impossible for the eye to see the mind; it can have some connection with the mind only when the latter cares to mind it. In a similar way, our connection with absolute knowledge depends mainly on His

sweet will. We must solely depend on His agent, or the spiritual master, through whom He likes to distribute Himself.

Our human society with its finest culture forms but an infinitesimal part of the dynamic absolute. How, except by the direct and positive method of revelation, dare we hope to comprehend or evolve any

conception of the supernatural knowledge of the unconditioned infinite? All intellectual giants prove themselves but pygmies before the absolute omniscient omnipotence who reserves the right to give Himself away through His own agents alone.

To our best knowledge and sincerity, however, we should see not to submit to a false agent. Here of course, we can't help ourselves very much; because in our present state we are mainly guided by our previous samskara or acquired nature. "Birds of the same feather flock together." Yet, although we are generally overpowered by habit, there is still the possibility of free choice to a certain extent, specially in the human species, otherwise correction becomes impossible, and punishment mere vengeance. Reality can assert itself. Light does not require darkness for its positive proof. The sun by itself can establish its supremacy over all other lights. Before an open and unbiased eye, the sad guru (real guide) shines above all professors of phenomenon.

Sri Guru manifests himself mainly in a twofold way - as the director from within and the preceptor from without. Both functions of the absolute help an individual soul - a disciple - to reach the absolute goal. In our fallen state we cannot catch the proper direction of the inner guide, so the merciful manifestation of the preceptor without is our sole help and hope. But at the same time it is only by the grace of the guru within that we can recognize the real preceptor without and submit to his holy feet.

A bona fide disciple must always remain fully awake to the fact that his highest spiritual fortune is but a gracious grant from the Absolute Lord, and not a matter of right to be demanded or fought out.

Constitutionally, we are equipped only to be proper recipients of God's favor. In this connection it should be clearly understood that an individual soul can never be substantially the same as the Absolute Person. Not even in his liberated or fully realized condition can an individual soul be one with Godhead. The

misconception of oneness has been introduced from the slothful nondiscrimination of the Absolute Personality from the luminous orb around His eternal, spiritual, and blissful home. In fact, an individual soul constitutes only a part of a particular power of intermediate value of the Supreme Lord, and as such he is capable of being converted from both sides.

He differs from the Absolute Entity both in quantity and quality, and is merely a dependent entity on the absolute. In other words, the Absolute Lord Krsna is the master, and an individual jiva soul is His constitutional subordinate or servant.

Such a relationship is constant and really wholesome for the jiva. The apprehension of slavery does not arise because of his free choice and immense positive gain. The freedom and individuality of the jiva are not only unharmed by surrender to the Absolute Good, but they really thrive in Him alone. Individual freedom and interest are the part and parcel of those who are of the absolute, and so they are quite at home there, as a fish is at home in water or an animal in a healthy atmosphere. But the freedom as well as all other qualities of the Supreme Personality are unlimited and transcendental, and so only by their partial functions they harmonize all relative entities.

Sri guru is not exclusively the same as the Supreme Lord Himself, but he fully represents the essence of the whole normal potency and embodies the most comprehensive and excellent service and favor of the Lord. As he is the fittest servitor of the Lord, he is empowered by the Lord to reinstate all misguided souls to their best interest. So, guru is the divine messenger of immortal hope and joy in this mortal and miserable world. His advent is the most auspicious and happy event to the suffering animation, and can be compared to the rising of the morning star that can guide the traveler lost in the desert. A gentle touch of Sri guru's merciful hand can wipe off the incessant tears from all weeping eyes. A patriot or philanthropist makes the problem only worse in his frantic and futile attempt to alleviate the deep-rooted pain of a suffering soul, as an ignorant doctor does in eagerly handling an unfortunate patient. Oh the day when this poor soul realizes the causeless grace of Sri gurudeva.

Swami B.R. Sridhar

- this essay was originally published in 1934, in The Harmonist.

Chapter 1 Surrender to Sri Guru

Even great scholars are perplexed in understanding what is good and what is bad, what to accept, and what to dismiss (kim karma kim akarmeti kavayo'py atra mohitah). Even great scholars fail to understand their real necessity. This material world is a jungle of perplexities, where the soul has accepted so many different kinds of bodies in different types of consciousness. In the Laws of Manu, it is written:

jalaja nava laksani

sthavara laksa vimsati

krmayo rudra sankhyakah

paksinam dasa laksanam

trimsal laksani pasavah

catur laksani manusah

There are 900,000 kinds of aquatics, 2,000,000 kinds of trees and plants, 1,100,000 kinds of insects and reptiles, 1,000,000 kinds of birds, 3,000,000 kinds of four legged beasts, and 400,000 kinds of human species. Manu says that the trees are in such a hopeless position as a result of their own karma. Their feelings of pain and pleasure are similar to ours; their souls are not of a lower standard.

Still, they are in such a deplorable position as a result of their own karma. They have no one to blame but themselves. This is the state of affairs in this external world.

We are living in an environment which is afflicted with serious misconception, misunderstanding, misguidance, and misbehavior.

How are we to ascertain what is good and what is bad, what we should aspire after and what we should reject? Innumerable alternatives have thronged in a crowd, coming to influence us. And when this area, covered by illusion and influenced by misunderstanding, is filled with such diversity, how can we hope to know the infinite spiritual world of Vaikuntha? With what attitude should we

approach that realm which is transcendental, beyond the realm of the senses and mind (adhoksaja).

The Genuine Guru

We must accept any way and any alliance that will help us gain entrance into that realm. We shall try to have even the slightest connection with that perfect goal of our innate aspiration. We are helpless; we are hopeless in the midst of disappointment. We are in extreme danger. We rely on our free will, our capacity of selection for our own good, but it is too minute and helpless to guide us. What danger we are in! All around us are witnesses to this danger. How important is a real guru who can guide us to our real welfare. We are in the midst of different forces that are drawing us, attracting us towards different directions, so proper guidance is the most valuable and the most important thing for all of us. If we accept direction from anywhere and everywhere, we will be misguided. Therefore, we must be careful to get proper direction. That direction has been given by Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita:

tad viddhi pranipatena

pariprasnena sevaya

upadeksyanti te jnanam

jnaninas tattva darsinah

"To understand transcendental knowledge, you must approach a self-realized soul, accept him as your spiritual master, and take initiation from him. Inquire submissively and render service unto him.

Selfrealized souls can impart knowledge unto you, for they have seen the truth."

Qualifications of a Disciple

Here, Krsna has given us the standard by which we can understand what is what, from a bona fide source. The standard to measure truth or untruth must come not from a vitiated, vulnerable plane, but from a real plane. And to realize that, we must have these three qualifications: pranipat, pariprasna, and seva. Pranipat means we must surrender to this knowledge, for it is not an ordinary class of knowledge, which as a subject we can make our object; it is supersubjective. We

may be the subjects in this mundane world, but we will have to become objects to be handled by the superknowledge of that plane.

Pranipat means that one approaches a spiritual master, saying, "I am finished with the experience of this external world; I have no charm for anything in this plane, where I have already traveled. Now I am offering myself exclusively at your altar. I want to have your grace." In this mood we should approach that higher knowledge.

Pariprasna means honest, sincere inquiry. We must inquire not with the tendency of discussion or in the mood of argument, but all our efforts should be concentrated in a positive line to understand the truth, without the spirit of doubt and suspicion. With full attention we should try to understand that truth, because it is coming from a higher plane of reality that we have never known. Finally, there is sevaya, or service. This is the most important thing.

We are trying to gain this knowledge not so we can get the help of that plane, not so we can utilize that experience for living here; rather we must give our pledge to serve that plane. Only with this attitude may we approach that plane of knowledge. We shall serve that higher knowledge; we won't try to make it serve us. Otherwise, we won't be allowed to enter into that domain. Absolute knowledge won't come to serve this lower plane. We must offer ourselves to be used by Him, not that we shall try to use Him in our own selfish way, to satisfy our lower purpose.

With the mood of service we shall dedicate ourselves to Him; not that He will dedicate Himself to satisfy our lower animal purpose. So, with this attitude we shall seek the plane of real knowledge and receive the standard understanding. And then we can know what is what, and have a proper estimation of our environment.

This is Vedic culture. Absolute knowledge has always been imparted by this process alone, and never by the intellectual approach. Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta used to give the analogy of the bee: honey is in a bottle, the cork is in place, and the bee has taken his seat on the glass. He tries to taste the honey by licking the bottle. But, just as the bee cannot taste the honey by licking the outside of the glass bottle, the intellect cannot approach the world of spirit. We may think that we have attained it, but that is not possible: a barrier is there, like the glass. Intellectual achievement is not real achievement of higher

knowledge. Only through faith, sincerity, and dedication can we approach that higher realm, and become a member. We can enter that higher plane only if they grant us a visa and admit us. Then we can enter that land of divine living.

So, a candidate must have these three qualifications before he can approach the truth which is on the higher plane of Absolute Reality.

He can approach the Absolute Truth only with an attitude of humility, sincerity, and dedication. There are similar statements in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Vedas. In the Upanisads it is said, tad vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet samit panih srotriyam brahma nistham: "Approach a spiritual master. Do not go to him hesitatingly or haphazardly, but with a clear and earnest heart."

Spiritual Life a One Way Ticket

One should not approach the spiritual master "cutting a return ticket."

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhupada used to always say, "You have come here cutting a return ticket." We must not approach the spiritual master with that attitude. Rather, we should think that we have seen everything, that we have full experience of this mortal world, and that we have nothing to aspire after here. With this clear consciousness, we should approach the guru. That is the only way for us to live. This world is mortal. There is no means, no possibility of living here, and yet the will to live is an innate tendency everywhere. "I only want to live and to save myself. I am running to the real shelter." With this earnestness, the disciple will bring his spiritual master the necessary materials for sacrifice. He won't go to his spiritual master only to trouble the guru, but will approach him with his own necessities already supplied. He will go there with his own bed and baggage. Not that he will show some kindness to the spiritual master and give him name and fame by becoming his disciple.

And what will be the spiritual master's position? He will be well-versed in the revealed truth, not in ordinary information. Revelation in many shades has been spread in the world from the upper realm, but the guru must have some spacious, graphic knowledge. He must have extensive knowledge about the revealed truth. And he must always be practicing real spiritual life. His activities are all connected with spirit, not with the mundane world. He is concerned with Brahman, the plane which can accommodate everything, the fundamental basis of everything (brahma nistham). Not that he is leading his life with any mortal,

mundane reference. He always lives in the transcendental plane and keeps himself in cinnection with that plane his whole life.

Whatever he does, he will do only with that consciousness. This is the version of the Upanisads.

And in the Srimad Bhagavatam (11.3.21) it is said: *tasmad gurum prapadyeta*

jijnasuh sreya uttamam

sabde pare ca nisnatam

brahmany upasamasrayam

Maya means misconception. We are living in the midst of misconception. Our understanding of the environment is based on a completely misconceived set of ideas and thoughts. We have no proper conception of anything in the absolute sense. Our ideas are all relative. Provincial selfishness has been imposed on the environment, and we are living under that misconception. When one comes to the conclusion that everything around him is mortal and that everything will vanish, then, with that mood, he will feel the necessity of approaching the guru, the divine guide and preceptor, with the purpose of inquiry. "What is the highest good for me?" With this inquiry, he will approach the spiritual master. And who will he approach? One who is not only well-versed in the precepts of the revealed scriptures, but who has also come in contact with the revealed truth. One who is conversant with the very object of the scriptures, and who has practical experience, who is established in pure consciousness, is a genuine guru. One should approach such a guide for his own relief, to understand what is the highest benefit in the world and how to attain it. This is necessary. It is real. It is not imaginary. At the same time, it is difficult. The Absolute Truth must be sought out through a real process, otherwise we shall go the wrong way and then say, "Oh, there is nothing here; it is not real." So, only if we follow this real process of understanding the truth will we experience the real nature of divinity.

Chapter 2 Initiation Into Transcendental Science

Devotee: Can you explain the real meaning of diksa, initiation?

Sridhara Maharaja: Srila Jiva Goswami has explained this in his Bhakti Sandarbha (868):

divyam jnanam yato dadyat

kuryat papasya sanksayam

tasmad dikseti sa prokta

desikais tattva-kovidaih

Experienced scholars have explained the meaning of diksa, or spiritual initiation, in this way: diksa is the process through which transcendental knowledge is imparted by the preceptor to the disciple.

As a result, all the disciple's previous bad tendencies are crushed.

Through diksa, all previous commitments are cleared, and one gets the light of new life in relationship with the transcendental Lord. Diksa, or initiation, is a process by which we are given a noble connection with the absolute center and at the same time, our previous commitments are all finished. It is an inner awakenment of life that brings divine knowledge. That wealth is there within us, but it is suppressed. Diksa means discovering one's inner wealth, and getting relief from all outward obligations.

With inner awakenment, the outward commitments vanish, just as when you reach home, all other arrangements you may have contracted for your comforts are all cut off, for at home you find full comfort. When we are in a foreign land, we may seek the comforts which are supplied in hotels, but when we reach home, the hotel comforts are discarded; we find no more use for them. Sometimes a minor is kidnapped from home. Later, while visiting his native place he may stay in a hotel, but if he suddenly finds his father's house, and returns home, his parents will recognize him and say, "O, my son! You were stolen from us when you were young. We recognize your face. I am your mother, this is your father, here is your sister." Then the hotel is no longer needed. In a similar way, with the inner awakenment of the soul, when we return back home, back to Godhead, we will find our comfortable home with Krsna. So, to make a connection with our real home and dispense with our outward links is known as diksa.

Mantra: The Spiritual Formula

Devotee: What is the difference between siksa, or spiritual instruction, and diksa?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Diksa mainly involves initiation into the mantra, the spiritual formula. Other instructions are necessary to substantiate it, to help it become effective. Certain activities are also helpful. These are all parts and parcels of initiation. So, a general direction is given by diksa, but how to substantiate that? Details are necessary. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.5.23-24) it is said,

sravanam kirtanam visnoh

smaranam pada-sevanam

arcanam vandanam dasyam

sakhyam atma-nivedanam

iti pumsarpita visnau

bhaktis cen nava-laksana

"Hearing about Krsna, chanting Krsna's glories, remembering Krsna, serving Krsna's lotus feet, worshiping Krsna's transcendental form, offering prayers to Krsna, becoming Krsna's servant, considering Krsna as one's best friend, and surrendering everything to Krsna - these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service." All these things are advised; a thousand details may be necessary.

Initiation: Spiritual Invasion

If a general plans to invade another country, he must first chalk out his strategy of attack in a broad way. When he goes to practically execute his plan, so many obstacles appear, and he has to solve them and march on. If one plans to travel, first he conceives of the whole plan in a nutshell: "From this foreign land, I will return home by this route."

But to carry out the plan in practice, so many details are necessary.

First it is chalked out in a rough plan, and then he must practically do so many things. First he must hire a taxi, then he has to go to the airport to purchase a ticket for the plane in this way, so many details are required. So, from partial knowledge, we have to develop final knowledge. This detailed knowledge is known as siksa.

Devotee: What is the position of a devotee, who although not yet fully free from the influence of maya, accepts disciples on the order of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and his spiritual master?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: It is better that a man who begins business with small capital has a connection with a wealthier capitalist. Then he can prosper in his business. In a similar way, as long as one is not completely established in Krsna consciousness, he must have some connection with superior aid. Then he will be safe. If we are to fight face to face with maya, illusion, help from the higher agency should be our only resource.

It is very difficult to control maya. Krsna says in Bhagavad-gita (7.14):

daivi hy esa gunamayi

mama maya duratyaya

mam eva ye prapadyante

mayam etam taranti te

"My illusory energy is impossible to overcome. Only one who surrenders to me can cross beyond it." Maya dreads only Krsna, for she has her backing from Him. If you attempt to cross maya alone, it will be impossible. You must have some higher connection. And with the help of that connection you can overcome illusion. Maya will withdraw only when she sees that you have the backing of higher potency. Alone, you cannot fight and gain victory over maya. It is impossible, because wherever you go, you are within the boundary of maya, illusion. It may be more or less intense, but it is allmaya. Only when you really come in touch with the plane above maya can you fight against maya; only then will maya withdraw. We must have some shelter beyond maya from where we can fight with illusion. We are advised to take shelter of sadhus, saints, and sastra, scriptures. Their help comes from above, and we must accept that help from the inner core of our hearts.

Accepting Disciples and Karma

Devotee: It seems that those who accept disciples have to undergo some physical difficulty or suffering because of accepting the karma of their disciples.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Physical difficulty should not be considered. And physical success also should not be considered of much value. One should not think that if a guru has a large number of disciples he is great.

One may voluntarily accept the responsibility of the spiritual life of so many disciples, but find that their improvement is not satisfactory. As a result, he may experience some disturbance. He may think, "I have taken charge of their lives, but I am not able to give them the desired improvement in their spiritual life." That is a good symptom. The Vaisnavas have no trouble for themselves, but they are troubled for others (para-duhkha duhkhi). In his prayer to Sanatana Goswami, Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami writes that Sanatana Goswami was always distressed upon seeing the distress of others. A Vaisnava has no mental trouble for himself, but he feels mental trouble when he sees the pain of others. It is difficult for a Vaisnava to tolerate. They are always sympathetic to the misery of others. This is the qualification of the intermediate devotee. He has no trouble of his own, but he is troubled by the pain of others. An intermediate devotee cannot ignore these things.

The spiritual master will have to digest some of the responsibility of the bad and undesirable activities of the disciple. He has the responsibility of managing them by his instruction. When a doctor has accepted a patient, and the patient is in pain, the doctor may feel some trouble in his mind: "I have taken charge of this patient, and I can't remove his difficulty." In this way, he may feel some voluntary responsibility. The spiritual master may experience different kinds of suffering in different stages. Sometimes a guru may feel, "I am doing as much as I can to help this disciple." Such a guru does not take so much responsibility for his disciple. He thinks, "I am doing my duty," and treats his disciples with this openness of mind. It is just as in the case of the consulting physician and the family doctor. The family doctor cannot shake off the responsibility of caring for his patients, but a doctor from outside may say, "If you like, you may engage another doctor." The consulting physician is not so much earnest for the patient. He may feel, "I am not perfect, I cannot make him pure immediately. Whether he improves is God's will. I can only do my best." From the beginning of their relationship, just as a doctor may approach his patient with this attitude, the guru

may approach his disciples. The question of how much responsibility the guru takes for the disciple is a question of the attitude he takes towards his disciples in particular cases.

Devotee: Does the disciple's advancement depend more on the guru or on his own efforts? How will the disciple make proper advancement in following the principles of his guru?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: That depends on the stages of realization of the disciple. Exclusive devotion must come from the disciple towards the guru. It is said in the Svetasvatara Upanisad (6.23):

yasya deve para bhaktir

yatha deve tatha gurau

tasyaite kathita hy arthah

prakasante mahatmanah

"The key to success in spiritual life is unflinching devotion to both the spiritual master and Krsna. To those great souls who have full faith in both Krsna and the spiritual master, the inner meaning of the scriptures is fully revealed." The guru is Krsna's representative. We are in search of divinity, and so, we must try to concentrate all our energy wherever we find a real connection with divinity. That is the key to success, because Krsna is all-conscious. So, the response to our devotional efforts will come from Krsna according to our attentiveness to Him. He is everywhere. In the conception of infinite, everywhere there is center, nowhere is there circumference. In every point there may be the center. Prahlada Maharaja saw the center present everywhere. Hiranyakasipu asked him, "Is your God in this pillar?" Prahlada replied, "Yes. He is there." And when Hiranyakasipu demolished the pillar, Lord Nrsmhadeva came out.

Guru - Absolute and Relative

Devotee: Can you explain this concept of the absolute and relative position of the spiritual master?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: By the special will of Krsna, gurudeva is a delegated power. If we look closely within the spiritual master, we will see the delegation

of Krsna, and accordingly, we should accept him in that way. The spiritual master is a devotee of Krsna, and at the same time, the inspiration of Krsna is within him. These are the two aspects of gurudeva. He has his aspect as a Vaisnava, and the inspired side of the Vaisnava is the guru. On a fast day like ekadasi, he himself does not take any grains. He conducts himself as a Vaisnava, but his disciples offer grains to the picture of their guru on the altar. The disciples offer their spiritual master grains even on a fast day.

The disciple is concerned with the delegation of the Lord, the guru's inner self, his inspired side. The inspired side of a Vaisnava is acarya, or guru. The disciple marks only the special, inspired portion within the guru. He is more concerned with that part of his character. But gurudeva himself generally poses as a Vaisnava. So, his dealings towards his disciples and his dealings with other Vaisnavas will be different. This is acintya-bhedabheda, inconceivable unity in diversity.

There may be imitation, and there may be deviation. Both are possible. For ulterior motives, one may make a trade of guruship, just as in the case of the caste goswamis and the sahajiya imitationists. For some reason or other, one may pose as a guru, but the symptoms of a real guru are given in the scriptures: sabde pare ca nisnatam brahmany upasamasrayam: "A bona fide spiritual master must be conversant, with the conclusions of the Vedic literature, fixed in realization of the Supreme Truth"(Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3.21).

Scriptures Need Saints

Anyone can say, "I am guru, he is not guru." Imitation is always possible, but the scriptures give the criterion for the selection of a real guru, and the real guru will extract the meaning of the scripture. Guru and sastra are interdependent. One will help another for our edification. The scriptures say we must read the scripture under the guidance of a proper professor, a Vaisnava guru (acaryavan puruso veda). So, the scripture is dependent on the spiritual master. And who is a spiritual master? The scriptures will explain. So they are interdependent: sadhu and sastra are both necessary. They are the active and the passive agents.

Devotee: Can you explain why Krsna appears in so many different gurus? Why must Krsna appear again and again? Can't we learn everything we need to know just by reading Bhagavad-gita? What is the need for constant revelation? Don't the old books contain all the truths we need to know?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: In Srimad-Bhagavatam, Krsna says, "First I transmitted Vedic knowledge to this world through Brahma. And that was entrusted to his disciples: the four Kumaras, Marichi, Angira, and other sages." The knowledge was first invested in them and later in books.

First it was presented in the form of sound, not script. Gradually it became fixed in writing. In the beginning, it descended directly through sound from one man to another, from lip to ear. No script or writing was invented at that time, but knowledge was contained in the form of sound. Passing through the ear to the mouth, and again to the ear of another, gradually it became lost. In connection with the mediator sometimes it becomes lost and disfigured, distorted, and then again the Lord feels the necessity of appearing in this world (yada yada hi dharmasya).

Sometimes Krsna comes himself, and sometimes he sends a normal thinking man to reinstate the standard of true religion. Krsna says, "This karma-yoga that I have spoken to you, Arjuna, I spoke first to Surya, and from Surya it was passed down from generation to generation. And so it has become mutilated and disfigured. Again I am speaking that very same thing to you today." The enervating plane gradually erodes the truth. The truth is bright when it first appears, but gradually with the contact of this enervating plane, it becomes weak, disfigured, and demoralized, and so Krsna appears from time to time to rejuvenate it, and bring about a renaissance.

Devotee: Is there any difference between an acarya and a guru?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Guru and acarya are the same but generally it may be said that an acarya does more extensive work. And also the acarya must have extensive knowledge of the scriptures, whereas the guru may not have expressly deep knowledge of scripture, but may have real knowledge of their purport. He may not be able to quote scripture extensively, but feels the meaning of the scriptures. He may be a guru. But an acarya is one who preaches widely and is able to extensively quote scriptural evidence.

Marketplace of Gurus

Devotee: There are so many imitation gurus in the guise of Vaisnavas who are simply out to cheat the innocent public. How can we know who is a real guru and who is a cheater? How do we know when we are being given real

knowledge and when we are being cheated?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: We have to find out what is the source of his knowledge. In the marketplace there may be imitation gold, but if we are sure that the gold we are purchasing is coming from a particular mine, we can buy it, with the assurance that it has not been tampered with on the way. In that way it can be understood: by examining the source.

Once, here in India, Gandhi wanted to revive the cherka system of homespun cloth. In the cherka system, the poor produce thread with a spinning wheel, and if everyone buys that cloth, called khadi, then the money goes to the pockets of the poor. But the Japanese and English cloth factories sent imitation "homespun" khadi here. They began manufacturing rough cloth, imitating the ordinary homespun cloth produced here by the poor. Gandhi found himself perplexed, "What is this?" he said. "My need is that the money go to the poorest pocket, but now the capitalists are producing imitation rough cloth abroad, and that is being sold here in India. Instead of money going to the poor here in India, it is going to the foreign capitalists." Then he founded one association, the Khadi association, and told his followers,

"You must purchase homespun cloth only from those shops who are connected with this association of mine. Then the money will surely go to the pockets of the poor." At that time he said, "This is guru parampara, the system of disciplic succession."

Revealed truth coming uncontaminated through a particular process is parampara. We must connect with a reliable succession. Only then can we get the genuine thing. The authorized association is necessary, guru parampara is necessary. So, before we read anyone's book, we shall try to find out who is his guru, and from where the substance is coming down. Is it only a facade, or is there any real substance within? If we can understand that he has a relationship with a genuine sadhu, then we can give some attention to him.

I often give the example of the homeopathic globule. The mere globule itself has no medicinal value. The potency is within. An ordinary guru may give the same mantra to his disciple, but what is the potency within the sound? What quality of conception or divine will is contained in that sound? That is all-important. To get the mantra from a sad guru, a genuine guru, means to get the internal good will or real conception about the Lord. The seed of a banyan tree may be a small

seed, but the great big banyan tree will come from that seed. The will with which the particular sound is given by the guru to the disciple is all-important. We may not trace that at present, but in time, if a favorable environment is there, it will express itself and develop into something great. So, when we go to purchase anything, we must be careful about imitations, or else we may be deceived.

Chapter 3 Descent of the Revealed Truth

Krsna consciousness, the spiritual Conception of the highest level, descends by flowing down from one level to the next, just as from the peak of a mountain, the Ganges flows in a zigzag way, from one peak to another. Sometimes the water of the Ganges mixes with the current of the river Saraswati. That water is not to be considered Ganges water. When the water of the Saraswati joins the current of the Ganges, it is considered to be Ganges water. When the two rivers meet, the water that flows away from the Ganges is not the Ganges; but when the Saraswati's waters enter into the current of the Ganges, it becomes the Ganges. That water will purify us, whatever its point of origin may have been. There is a saying that whatever water is deep within the current of the Ganges riverbed, is the real Ganges water.

That water will purify us, whatever its point of origin may have been.

The purifying potency of the water has nothing to do with the water we can feel and see. What can we see with our physical eyes? The current of the Ganges is pure. When the spirit and sanction is there, it is a living thing, and can purify everyone.

Dead Mantras

So, the very gist of the guru parampara, the disciplic succession, is siksa, the spiritual teaching, and wherever it is to be traced, there is guru. One who has the transcendental eye, the divine eye, will recognize the guru wherever he appears. One who possesses knowledge of absolute divine love in purity - he is guru. Otherwise the guru parampara is only a body parampara: a succession of bodies.

Then the caste brahmanas, the caste goswamis, will continue with their trade, because body after body, they are getting the mantra. But their mantra is dead.

We are after a living mantra, and wherever we can trace the living tendency for a higher type of devotional service, we shall find that there is our guru. One who has that sort of vision awakened will be able to recognize the guru wherever he may appear.

Initiation into the mantra means to impart real knowledge and devotional sentiment from one to another. And that must be genuine.

Nothing can be known about a homeopathic globule by an outer physical inspection, but the potency is within. So also within the mantra the important thing is the type of thought or sentiment which is imparted through that sound. The impersonalists have got the same mantra, and are also chanting the holy name of Krsna, but that sort of name will vanish in the brahmajyoti. They won't be able to cross the Viraja, the river between the material and spiritual worlds. When a mayavadi chants the name of Krsna, Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that his chanting of the name of Krsna is just like thunder to the holy body of Krsna. It does not produce any soothing effect.

The Gaudiya Math deals with reality, not with the frame. We are trying to understand what is what in the spiritual thought-world. We are not enchanted or captured by the mere form. We are interested in the step by step development in spiritual thought. In his Upadesamrta (10), Srila Rupa Goswami has said, karmibhyah parito hareh priyataya vyaktim yayur jnaninas, tebhyo jnana-vimukta bhakti-paramah premaika nisthas tatah. "Out of many materialists one may be a philosopher. Out of many philosophers, one may become liberated and take to devotional service. Out of many devotees, one may attain pure love of Krsna. He is the best of all." We are interested in understanding this gradation: what is the Viraja river, what is the spiritual sky, the planet of Lord Siva, the Vaikuntha world of Visnu, Lord Rama's Ayodhya, and then Krsna in Dwaraka, Mathura, and Vrndavana? We want to know the realistic view of the whole gradation of devotional thought. Krsna shows this gradation in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.14.15) where he says:

na tatha me priyatama

atma-yonir na sankarah

na ca sankarsano na srir

naivatma ca yatha bhavan

"Neither Brahma, nor Siva, nor Sankarsana of Vaikuntha, nor the goddess of fortune Laksmidevi, nor even my own self is as dear to me as you. You are my favorite, Uddhava."

We have to follow the spirit; otherwise after Jahnava devi, the wife of Lord Nityananda, up to Vipina Goswami, from whom Bhaktivinoda Thakura took initiation, there are so many unknown lady gurus.

Through them, the mantra came to Vipina Goswami, and from him Bhaktivinoda Thakura received the mantra. We accept Bhaktivinoda Thakura, but should we count all those ladies in our disciplic succession? What was their realization?

Slaves of the Truth

We are slaves of the truth. We are beggars for the pure current of truth that is constantly flowing: the fresh current. We are not charmed by any formality. I will bow down my head wherever I find the river of nectar coming down to me. When one is conscious that the Absolute Truth is descending to him from the highest domain, he will think, "I must surrender myself here."

Mahaprabhu says to Ramananda Raya, kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya, yei krsna-tattva vetta sei guru haya. "Wherever the truth appears, wherever the nectar of divine ecstasy descends, I shall offer myself as a slave. That is my direct concern." Whatever form it takes doesn't matter much; the form has some value, but if there is any conflict, the inner spirit of a thing should be given immense value over its external cover. Otherwise, if the spirit has gone away, and the bodily connection gets the upper hand, our so-called spiritual life becomes sahajiya, a cheap imitation.

When we are conscious of the real substance of Krsna consciousness, the real wealth we are receiving from our spiritual master, then our spiritual life cannot be sahajiyaism, imitationism. We must be aware enough to detect our guru's advice when we find it in another. One who is awake will see, "Here is my guru's advice, I find it here in this man. Somehow or other, it has come here. How, I do not know, but I see my guru's characteristics, his dealings, and behavior in this person." When we are able to recognize a thing for its intrinsic value, then, wherever we find it, we cannot neglect it.

There is an example of this in an instance regarding Aurobindo Ghosh, of Pondicherry. He was the first leader of the Anarchist Party and practically the

founder of the revolutionary movement in Bengal.

In 1928, a case against him was proceeding in Calcutta High Court. A famous attorney, Mr. Norton, was in charge of the prosecution.

Aurobindo had absconded, and when the case was going on, he was not to be found anywhere. Norton was concerned. How to find him?

Aurobindo's English was very good English. He had been educated in England from childhood, and could speak English even better than many Englishmen. Norton began to search through different papers and magazines for Aurobindo's writing. Finally, he found Aurobindo's style of writing in the Amrita Bazaar Patrika, a Bengali newspaper.

"Here is Mr. Ghosh!" he said. The editor of the Amrita Bazaar Patrika was summoned to court to find out whether Aurobindo Ghosh had written the article. Norton examined him:

"This is your paper. You must know who has written this article. You are the editor."

"Yes, I know."

"Do you know this man, Aurobindo Ghosh?"

"Yes, I know him. I consider him to be one of the greatest men in the world."

"As the editor of this newspaper do you know who wrote this article?"

"Yes, I know."

"Has Mr. Ghosh written this article?"

"I won't say."

Norton asked him, "Do you know what is the punishment?"

"Yes. Six months imprisonment."

"You are ready for that?"

"Yes, I am ready for that." Holding up the newspaper article, Norton said, "Here is Mr. Ghosh! I rest my case."

He saw Aurobindo in his writing, and in a similar way we must see,

"Here is my gurudeva!" Our spiritual master would also sometimes say of one of his disciples who had departed, "Bhaktivinoda Thakura came to me, but I could not recognize him." Those whose divine vision is awakened are always seeing signs of divinity everywhere.

One Krsna in Many Gurus

We must have the vision to recognize the presence of our guru's temperament. Mahaprabhu says madhavendra purira sambandha dhara jani. When Mahaprabhu met the Sanodiya brahmana, upon seeing his movements, he at once detected that this brahmana must have some connection with Madhavendra Puri. He said, "Without his connection, I could never find such symptoms of transcendental ecstasy. It must come from Madhavendra Puri." So, we must know Krsna consciousness in Truth. It is said acaryam mam vijaniyan, the spiritual master is not to be differentiated. One thing is coming down from the Supreme Lord, so the oneness of continuity is not to be ignored. Guru can be here; guru can be in another body also. The same teacher may come in a different body to inspire us; he may come to give us new hope and higher education. The substance should always be given a higher value than the form.

First understand the degree of purity in Krsna consciousness. The followers of form are only imitationists; they want only to exploit Mahaprabhu and not to serve him. They are our worst enemies. They are traitors; they have taken the garb of Mahaprabhu's sampradaya, and they are saying something bogus. This is cheap marketing; they are extensively selling adulterated things very cheaply. They have no inner necessity to attain the purest thing (pujala ragapatha gaurava-bange). Although he was such an exalted Vaisnava, our guru maharaja never presented himself as a great devotee. He always used to say, "I am a servant of the servant of the Vaisnavas." That was his claim. And he would say, "The higher devotees are my guru, they are so exalted."

First come and practice all these things, and then you can hope to reach the goal. It is not so easy, or so cheap. "Out of many liberated persons, a pure devotee of Lord Krsna is extremely rare." (koti-mukta-madhye 'durlabha' eka krsna-bhakta).

Krsna consciousness is an internal thing, and those who cannot see the internal truth will make much of the external cover. We do not support that. Rather we are interested in the real spirit. All the opposing elements who are interested in externals cannot touch us. Dogs may bark, but the barking of a dog has no importance. Because they make so much of the outer thing, they have no real purification of the heart to accept the pure thing, to discriminate what is purity, or what is love of Godhead, prema, after which even Brahma and Mahadeva aspire.

Chapter 4 The Original Guru

The original spiritual master is Nityananda Prabhu. He is the general representation of guru. In the spiritual world, he is the guru-tattva principle in the four primary mellows of devotion, excluding the conjugal mellow. In madhurya-rasa, Baladeva's representation is Ananga Manjari, the sister of Radharani.

The position of Nityananda is greater than that of Baladeva. Why, He is distributing prema, divine love. And what is prema? It is higher than all other achievements. If one can give divine love, then all others must be subordinate to him. If Krsna is subordinate to Mahaprabhu, then of course, Balarama is subordinate to Nityananda. They are similar, but when magnanimity is added, Balarama becomes Nityananda. That Balarama who can distribute divine love, who can perform that higher function has come here as Nityananda. Our foundation must be solid and proper. Then the structure should be erected. Otherwise the whole thing will go down (heno nitai vine bhai radha krsna paite nai). We can get a solid foundation from Nityananda Prabhu.

One day Nityananda Prabhu came to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's house in Mayapura. Mahaprabhu's mother, Saci devi, and Visnupriya devi, his wife, were also there, as well as other devotees. Suddenly, Nityananda arrived, quite naked.

Mahaprabhu managed to give him some cloth. And perhaps He was concerned that the devotees might have some misconception about Nityananda Prabhu. So, to prevent this he asked Nityananda Prabhu

for his kaupina, his loincloth. He tore it up and distributed it amongst the

householders that were present, instructing them, "Keep a piece of his loincloth, as a kavaca, an amulet, and tie that with a thread to your arm or wear it around your neck. Please keep it with you. Then you will be able to achieve sense control very soon."

Nityananda Prabhu has control of his senses to the extreme degree; he does not know anything of this world. His vairagya, indifference to the world of mundane transaction, is of such a degree that he can appear naked amongst both male and female. So, the grace of Nityananda Prabhu will construct a firm foundation for us. If there is a firm foundation, then we may build a great structure over it. If we have faith in Nityananda, then that faith can bear any amount of weight. It won't betray us.

So, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has laid stress amongst the Westerners on devotion to Nityananda. First, we must get His mercy. And then, afterwards, we can get the mercy of Radha-Krsna.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu means Radha-Krsna (sri krsna caitanya radha-krsna nahe anya). First achieve the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu, and then Gauranga Mahaprabhu, and then Sri Radha Govinda.

In these three stages, we must raise ourselves up.

Devotee: How does one attain the mercy of Lord Nityananda?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: One who finds more inclination to serve Gauranga and his dhama, his transcendental land, and his servants can get the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu. Nityananda is very much kind to one who has some special tendency towards Gaura lila.

"Take the Name of Gauranga"

Nityananda Prabhu walked from door to door in Bengal, saying, "Take the name of Gauranga! I'll become your servant. You can purchase me if you only take the name of Gauranga. I'll be sold to you without any price or condition." That was his temperament. When Mahaprabhu was in Puri, he sent Nityananda Prabhu to Bengal. At that time, he said, "Without you I don't find anyone who can spread the holy name of Krsna, or devotional service to Krsna, in Bengal.

They are more engaged in the tantric method and the smrti. They make too much

of these trifling things. They are puffed up, thinking that they have finished all knowledge. So, Bengal is a very hard field for preaching. Without you, no one will be able to awaken the masses.

Separate yourself from the higher castes and approach the masses with the holy name of Krsna. You are the fittest person for this work."

Nityananda Prabhu went to Bengal, but without trying to preach the glories of the holy name of Krsna, Nityananda began to preach the name of Gauranga. Nityananda Prabhu found that there is some danger of thinking that Krsna's pastimes are very much akin to the mundane debauchery, lying, and stealing of a degraded soul. Krsna's pastimes are of a highly confidential nature. It is very difficult for the masses to understand the purity of krsna-lila. The mass mind cannot accept krsna-lila as the highest attainment. So, Nityananda Prabhu found it would be difficult to preach krsna-lila, but he found it would be easy to preach gaura-lila, where Krsna has come to distribute himself to the public with so much capital in his mind. Gauranga means a dynamo which wants to distribute Krsna, surcharged with the most magnanimous, intensified, pity and kindness for the ordinary people, with the greatest affection even for the criminals. Nityananda Prabhu wanted to bring them in connection with Gauranga, for then krsna-lila would automatically be within their fist. So, he began to preach about Gauranga, not Radha-Krsna, as commanded by Mahaprabhu. So, Nityananda Prabhu says, bhaja gauranga kaha gauranga, laha gauranga nama, "Worship Gauranga, speak only of Gauranga, and chant the name of Gauranga."

There is another instance of the relationship between Krsna and Balarama and Gauranga and Nityananda, which is described in the Caitanya-bhagavata. Saci devi had a dream that Krsna and Balarama were sitting on a throne, and Nityananda was fighting with Balarama, "Come down from the throne. It is no longer Dvapara-yuga. The age of Kali has come and my master Gauranga must occupy your position on this throne. You come down!" Balarama began giving some opposition. "No, no, why should we come down? We have been sitting on this throne for such a long time." Nityananda Prabhu began forcibly taking him down, and Balarama submitted slightly.

Nityananda Prabhu said, "My master Gauranga wants to take the position now. The age for him has come." So Nityananda is very partial to Gauranga. He says, "Krsna is far off. My Lord is Gauranga."

So, we must be very grateful to Nityananda Prabhu, for he is our guru. And guru's grace is so important that Raghunatha Dasa Goswami says, "O, Radharani, I want your grace. Without you, I don't want Krsna separately. I never want Krsna without you." That should be the healthy attitude of a devotee. This has been explained by Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, in his Gurvastakam:

yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasado

yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi

dhyayan stuvams tasya yasas tri sandhyam

vande guroh sri-caranaravindam

"I bow down to the lotus feet of sri gurudeva. By his grace, we achieve the grace of Krsna; without his grace, we are lost. Therefore, we should always meditate on sri gurudeva, and pray for his mercy."

This is the position of sri guru, by whose grace we can get everything, we can get the grace of Krsna, and without whose grace, we have no other prospect. So, in this way, we must have reverence for he who has given us our first connection with Krsna consciousness.

Guru Is Not a Doll

But at the same time we offer reverence to gurudeva, we must not conceive that the guru is a doll, a lifeless figure. Because we are familiar with a particular figure and accept that as our guru we should not become misled. The important thing is what he says, his instructions. That is attracting our inner hearts. I am not this body. I am the inquirer. That thing which is satisfying me, drawing the inquirer to the inquired - I must try to locate that thing in him. I must not rely on material calculation. I am not this body. Who am I, the disciple? Am I only this body, this figure, this color, this caste? Or am I this temperament, this scholarship and intellectualism? No. I am he who has come to seek. Who is the party within me, and who is the party in guru? We must be fully awake to that. What is the inner thing? I have come for that. We must be awake to our own interest.

There is the relative principle and the absolute principle. We shall have to

eliminate the form, ignore the form; we shall always have to keep the spirit. Otherwise, we become form worshipers, idol worshipers.

Guru: More than Meets the Eye

It is said, of course, that the connection with the spiritual master is eternal (caksudana dilo yei, janme janme prabhu sei). But we must not identify our guru with the appearance we perceive with our physical senses. Our inner identification of him will be clarified according to the growth of our vision. When our vision increases and takes shape from material to transcendental, his look will also change accordingly.

A man is sometimes known most externally, by his uniform, and then by his body, then by his mind, then by his intelligence. As much as our eye will develop to see things rightly, what we are seeing will also change its face. Krsna says, acaryam mam vijaniyan, "Ultimately it is I who am the acarya." It is the function of divinity, and in different stages there may be different forms. Different acaryas may work at the same time.

The knowledge, the ideal, is growing from subtle to gross. And the depth of the vision of the eye will disclose the different figures of the different acaryas. It will go in different rasas to the highest position, by a gradual process of realization. Otherwise our knowledge will be based on the material conception. And to force the material conception onto divinity is a crime, it is ignorance, it is erroneous.

We have to free ourselves from the snare of identifying reality with the physical form presented to our senses. The eyes deceive us; they cannot give us the proper form or color. The ears cannot give us the proper sound. The concrete reality is beyond the experience of our senses. So, then what is that thing? Because we are in such a low position, we can gradually go there to the inner world only with the help of our guru.

But how can we recognize our guru? Sometimes in the winter he wears a particular dress, and in the summer he wears another dress. If we attach so much importance to the external dress, then what should we do? Should we think that the dress is indispensable to the body?

The guru may come to us in a particular body. Suppose the guru appears as a young man. When he has become an old man, and the young form has grown into another form, how are we to recognize him? How are we to differentiate?

Again, in one birth, he may have come in a particular body, and another time, he may appear in a different body. The same guru may appear differently at different times. How are we to recognize him? From the external consideration we must go to the internal.

If I am devoid of flesh and blood, and I exist only in a subtle body, then I shall also find my guru there, in a subtle body. The demigods, gandharvas, and siddhas, the perfected beings in the heavenly planets, also have their gurus, but they do not have a material body, nor does their guru have a material body.

So, by eliminating the external conception, we have to enter into the internal, and that will be all-important to a progressive disciple. That does not mean that one should disregard the physical form of our guru. But the real importance is within. We must worship the remnants of the guru, his coat, his boot, his sandal. But that does not mean that his shoe is superior to his body; we must serve his person.

In a similar way, if we are eager to do some physical service for him, if we want to massage his feet, but he does not desire that, and says, "No, no, no," then should we do that? Our internal obedience to him will be higher. In this way, we have to make progress from the gross to the subtle.

Who is guru? Where is he to be located? What is his ideal? What does he really want me to do? These things must not be dismissed from our ears. We must not give only formal adherence. We want the spiritual way. The spiritual man is going to the spiritual world to have the spiritual realization. It is all a spiritual transaction. And all conceptions of mundane, whether physical, mental, or intellectual, should be eliminated in our journey if we want to go to the inner world of substance.

Progress: Elimination and Acceptance

This attitude will decide our real progress, our real design of life. Our fulfillment comes always from the inner side. If one can catch up that thread, then he can go and get things of that higher, spiritual quality.

We may appreciate the beautiful figure, style, movement, and intellectual delivery of the spiritual master, and so many other things may be appreciable. But what should be the highest focal point of our realization? What should be our highest aim, for which we will eliminate everything else?

Progress means elimination and acceptance. And our spiritual life must always be a dynamic thing, otherwise we shall be dead. Progress means acceptance and elimination. The scientists also say this in their theory of natural selection, "survival of the fittest." Nature is selecting some and eliminating others. Life is dynamic; we are living in a dynamic world. Everywhere we find acceptance and elimination. That is progress. And our life must be progressive, not static.

To get the grace of Nityananda Prabhu, we should try as far as possible to study the character of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu, to serve him, to serve his dhama, and his devotees. That will easily help us attain the grace of Nityananda Prabhu. And there will always be so many practical dealings in our present stage, but we must always keep the highest ideal over our heads. With this ideal we shall be able to make progress. Our ideal, our highest model - that is our all in all in life. To be acquainted with the conception of the highest ideal and to be on the path of realization of that goal is the greatest wealth in one's life.

Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami prays, "I only aspire after one thing.

I cherish the hope that one day I may be welcomed into the plane where Radhika and Madhava are in their glory, sitting and playing."

That should be our prospect. This is found in Raghunatha Dasa Goswami's prayer to his guru. He says:

nama-srestham manum api saci-putram atra svarupam rupam tasyagrajam uru-purim mathurim gostavatim radha-kundam giri-varam aho radhika-madhavasam prapto yasya prathita-krpaya sri gurum tam nato 'smi

"I am fully indebted to sri gurudeva. Why? He has given me so many things. He has given me the highest conception of the holy name of Krsna, the highest form of sound which contains the highest form of thought, aspiration, ideal, everything. And next he has given me the mantra." The name is there within the mantra. Without the name, the mantra is nothing. If the name of Krsna is withdrawn and replaced with another name, the mantra will give the opposite result. The name of Krsna is all in all. And within the mantra, the name is couched in a particular way as a sort of prayer.

And then he says, "He has given me the service of that great savior, the son of Mother Saci, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is like a golden mountain standing to show the direction of krsna-lila. And gurudeva has brought me to the lotus

feet of Mahaprabhu's most favorite personal assistant, Svarupa Damodara, who is the representation of Lalita devi, the most favorite friend of Radhika.

"Then he has brought me in connection with Sri Rupa, who was ordered to distribute the highest kinds of devotional love, rasa."

Vaidhi bhakti, the worship of the Lord in awe and reverence, is of a lower order. But raganuga-bhakti, spontaneous love, the hearts innermost dealings, was distributed through Srila Rupa Goswami.

Mahaprabhu considered Sri Rupa the best to deal with raganuga-bhakti.

Dasa Goswami says, "Then, by his grace, I have achieved the association of Srila Sanatana Goswami, who adjusts our position in relation to raganuga-bhakti.

He explains the path of vaidhi-bhakti, and gives us sambandha-jnana: the knowledge of what is what, a proper acquaintance with the environment." Then he says, "Gurudeva has given me Mathura Mandala, where Radha and Govinda have their pastimes; where the forest, the hills, every creeper, shrub, and grain of sand, everyone is bearing the acquaintance of Radha-Krsna lila, and wherever I shall cast my glance they will help me in my remembrance of Radha and Govinda. I have received all these things from my gurudeva: Vrndavana, where the cows and the milkmen have their village constructed. I am becoming acquainted with their association, their nature, and their feelings of love for Krsna.

"By the grace of gurudeva, I have become acquainted with Radha-kunda, the favorite place of Radha and Govinda for their pastimes, and this great Govardhana. And lastly he has given me the hope that one day I can get the service of Sri Sri Radhika and Madhava. I have been given all these assurances by my gurudeva, so I bow my head with all my respects to his lotus feet."

So, if we are conscious of all these spiritual matters, then we can think that we have approached our gurudeva properly. What is our guru?

What is his mission? It is filled with all these things. Devoid of that, what is our interest?

What is ISKCON?

Devotee: There are so many visions about the International Society for Krsna Consciousness (ISKCON). But what should the real vision of ISKCON be?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: In this verse, Raghunatha Dasa Goswami gives the real acquaintance of what is ISKCON (nama-srestham manum api saci-putram atra svarupam). ISKCON must not deviate from this line. We have not come here to deceive ourselves, but to fulfill ourselves. ISKCON will fulfill everyone's inner demand, even extending to the vegetables and stones, taking them to the feet of Mahaprabhu and the goswamis. From village to village, everyone, in every place, should be hunted and approached, "Take the name of Krsna! Come under the flag of Mahaprabhu!" This grand worldwide mission will thrive like anything; it will touch the heavens and cover the Earth, and other planets also. That was the aim of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and we understand and appreciate that.

Chapter 5 God Consciousness vs. Society Consciousness

Student: In the quest for spiritual truth, one may join a religious mission to advance towards the ultimate goal of life. After some time, however, sectarian policies may appear to bar the path of progress. He may see that within the society, pragmatic concerns take precedence over spiritual ideals. If one feels the necessity to look elsewhere, his authorities may tell him that there are no higher truths to be found.

One may also be warned that if he leaves the society, he will suffer serious repercussions. He may become an outcast, branded as a heretic for pursuing what he sincerely feels to be the ideal upon which the society was founded. Should he risk leaving the society, ignoring the advice of his immediate authorities, or should he try to remain within the society?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Progress means elimination and new acceptance. So, when there is a clash between the relative and the absolute standpoint, the relative must be left aside, and the absolute should be accepted. Suppose you are American, but at heart you are a socialist. In your general practices, you will live harmoniously as an American, but when there is a conflict between the capitalists and the socialists, which side will you accept: socialist or capitalist?

Your creed is that of a socialist. You live in a country where the majority are capitalists. When there is no difference between the two parties, there is no conflict, but when there is a clash, which side will you side with? Internally you may identify yourself as a socialist, but for the sake of peace, and for the good of the country, you may not express it externally. But suppose you are an out and out socialist.

You will try to keep your creed, the purity of your faith for the socialists. You will try to leave the country and join the socialists.

So, the absolute and the relative are two different classes of interest.

And we find more importance in the absolute interest. We must be sincere to our own creed. Sometimes we have to leave our paraphernalia if it does not suit us. So also, even in the conception of purity of the Krsna consciousness movement, in the Vaisnava creed, there is purity and form. The form is necessary to help me in a general way to maintain my present position. At the same time, my conception of the higher ideal will always goad me to advance, to go forward, and wherever I go, I must follow the greater model, the greaterideal.

Spiritual life is progressive, not stagnant. Do you follow?

Devotee: Yes.

Catholics, Protestants, and Puritans

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: It is progressive. We are in the stage of sadhana, spiritual practice, and we want a progressive life. We want to go ahead, not backwards. The formal position will help me to maintain my present status, and my extraordinary affinity for the ideal will goad me towards the front. Just as there are so many progressive parties in so many missions: progressive Communist, progressive Christianity. First therewere Catholics, then Protestants, again Puritans, in this way Christianity progressed. So, there is development in the right way, and also in the wrong way. The search for Sri Krsna is dynamic and living, so adjustment and readjustment is always going on. And we should also change our present position accordingly, so that we may not have to sacrifice the high ideal for which we have come.

One is born in a particular land by the arrangement of nature, but his high ideal may sometimes ask him to leave the country. Einstein had to leave Germany and

go to America for his high ideal of life. And so many similar instances may be found in the world. The ideal is all in all. The highest ideal in a man is his highest jewel. Our most precious gem is our ideal.

Many things are recommended in the scriptures, but they are meant to promote us towards the truth in an indirect way (sva-dharme nidhanam sreya). It is recommended at a certain stage that for the sake of our close friends, we should give up our ideal. But in the Bhagavad-gita, Krsna's final instruction is sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: "If it is necessary to maintain the highest ideal, you must give up your friends. Surrender to me. I am the real purport of the scriptures." The highest kind of idealists give up their country, their family, their friends, and everything else, but they can't give up their ideal.

In the Bhagavad-gita, Krsna says, "It is better to die while performing one's own duty than to try to do another's duty." That is one stage of understanding: the relative consideration. The absolute consideration

is also given in the Bhagavad-gita: sarva-dharman parityaja mam ekam saranam vraja. Krsna says, "Give up everything. Come to me directly." This is the revolutionary way. This is absolute. And this is relative: "Stickto your own clan. Don't leave them." That is the national conception. There is nation consciousness and God consciousness; society consciousness and God consciousness. God consciousness is absolute. If society consciousness hinders the development of God consciousness, it should be left behind. This is confirmed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (5.5.18):

gurur na sa syat sva jano na sa syat

pita na sa syaj janani na sa syat

daivam na tat syan na patis ca sa syan

na mocayed yah samupeta mrtyum

"Even a spiritual master, relative, parent, husband, or demigod who cannot save us from repeated birth and death should be abandoned at once." What to speak of ordinary things, even the guru, may have to be abandoned. One may even have to give up one's own spiritual guide, as in the case of Bali Maharaja, or one's relatives, as in the case of Vibhisana. In the case of Prahlada, his father had to be given up, and in the caseof Bharata Maharaja, it was his mother. In the case of

Khatvanga Maharaja, he left the demigods, and in the case of the yajna patnis, (the wives of the brahmanas) they left their husbands in the endeavor to reach the Absolute Personality.

We need society only to help us. If our affinity to the society keeps us down, then that should be given up, and we must march on. There is the absolute consideration and the relative consideration. When they come into clash, the relative must be given up, and the absolute should be accepted. If my inner voice, my spiritual conscience decides that this sort of company cannot really help me, then I will be under painful necessity to give them up, and to run towards my destination, wherever my spiritual conscience guides me. Any other course will be hypocrisy, and it will check my real progress. If we are sincere in our attempt, then no one in the world can check us or deceive us; we can only deceive ourselves (na hi kalyana-krt kascid durgatim tata gacchati). We must be true to our own selves, and true to the Supreme Lord. We must be sincere.

Disappearance of the Guru

Student: After the disappearance of the spiritual master, how should the disciples continue his mission?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: You must not neglect your conscience.

You may go to fight as a soldier, to save your country, or your people, or your honor. Your environment does not depend on your whim. It may appear extremely perplexing, but you will have to face that.

However complex the battlefield may be, as a soldier, you will have to fight. Otherwise you have no faith in your own cause.

There may be disturbances. Rather we say there should be, there may even be fighting amongst devotees, but we should not leave the preaching of Mahaprabhu, despite all differences. Disturbance must come, because our most beloved guru has withdrawn from amongst us. Such a great curse has been thrown on our heads; should we like to live peacefully? In its wake, disturbances must come, and we must undergo them. Still, we must remain sincere; we must face the difficulty in a proper way. It has come to train us to go in the right direction.

What we received from our spiritual master we understood only in a rough

estimation. Now, things have come in such a way that we have to scrutinize ourselves in every position. We have to analyze ourselves. Atma-niksepa, self-analysis has begun. We are under trial.

What we received from our spiritual master, in what way have we received it? Properly, or only showingly? The time has come to purify us, to test whether we are real students, real disciples, or his disciples only in face and confession. What is the position of a real disciple? If we live in the society, what is the depth of our creed? In what attitude have we accepted his teachings? How deep-rooted is it within us? The fire has come to test whether we can stand. Is our acceptance real? Or is it a sham, an imitation? This fire will prove that.

Surrounded by Karma

So, we must not be afraid of any adverse circumstances. Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita, "A happy ksatriya hankers for the battle you are facing" (sukhinah ksatriya partha labhante yuddham idrsam). So, a bad workman quarrels with his tools. Our karma has come to face us, to surround us, and we can't avoid it. These disturbances are a result of our own karma; they came from within us. So, we must not quarrel. We must act properly in dealing with that.

We have to scrutinize more accurately what we thought we understood. Everyone must ask himself, "Where am I? What is my real need? And how much am I hankering for the real thing?" All these things will be expressed, and made public. So, this is the real field of sadhana, or practice. Our practice, our advancement needs all these difficulties. Otherwise, we may not know what is progress, and we will become hypocrites, and give the same adulterated thing to others. So, to purify ourselves, it is necessary that so many disturbances come.

And God has no error. He commands the environment. It is not our responsibility. The responsibility of the environment does not rest upon us. Our responsibility is with ourselves alone. The environment is in the hands of the Lord. He has not done any wrong to me. If I am sincere, then I have to adjust myself with this environment and put my faith before Him. By our stand in any circumstances in the battle, our patriotism will be put to test. We will be tested to see whether we are real soldiers or not.

Anything may come, but we will have to face that. I must not forget my Lord, my guru, my Gauranga, my Radha-Govinda, under any circumstances. Under all

unfavorable circumstances, I must stand with my head erect and say, "Yes! I am a servant of that clan, that sampradaya. Everyone may leave me, but I shall stand alone!" With this attitude we must march on, whatever the circumstances may be.

Then, the recognition may come in my favor, that "Yes, under such trying circumstances he is still there." Our superiors will be pleased with us.

We must analyze ourselves. How much are we selfish? To what percent are our unwanted bad habits, anarthas, still present within our hearts? How much are the impurities of karma, jnana, mental desires, and other filthy things mixed with the real faith - that must come out, and that must be eliminated in different ways. If we want real good, no one can hinder us. With this spirit, we must move, and then we will be able to understand what is what.

Jesus and Judas

Even Christ told his followers, "One of you will betray me." Judas was amongst the twelve. So, Jesus said, "Amongst the twelve of you, there is one who will hand me over to the enemy this very night."

Even this may be possible. He said, "Even Peter, you will also deny me thrice before the cock crows." "Oh, no, no, no, I can't deny you."

But no pride of a devotee does the Lord tolerate. He wants surrender, complete surrender. "No, no," Peter said, "I am your faithful servant."

That kind of ego also must not stand. Peter, who was the leader, was also exposed. So, no pride is tolerated by the Lord.

Devotees are only tools in the hands of the Lord. One Muslim king advertised for a sycophant, a "yes-man." Previously in the court of the kings, they had sycophants. Whatever the king will say, he would give ditto to that. He advertised that he wanted a flatterer, and many men came and applied for the job. He began interviewing them: "Do you think you'll be able to do your duty properly?"

"Yes, I will be able to do."

"I think you won't be able to do it properly."

"No sir, I shall be able to do it."

They were all dismissed but one. When the king told him: "I think you will not be able to discharge the duty of a flatterer," one of them said,

"I also think like that."

"No, no, no, you will be able, you are the fittest."

"Yes, I am the fittest."

"No, no, I doubt."

"Yes, I also doubt."

The king said, "This is the man for the job." Those that continuously claimed they were fit were all dispersed and rejected. So, our soul must have such flexibility in the service of the Lord. We must have no ego whatsoever. Of course, that is in the external sense for we have our permanent ego within, when the soul enters into that higher domain. The position of that is a separate thing. But this material ego, that must be dissolved cent percent. But when put into the fire, it will be burned into ashes.

And we must be one-pointed in our aim towards the truth. Dronacarya was the weapon-master, the astra-guru of the Pandavas. One day while testing the progress of his disciples, he put an artificial bird in the top of a tree. One by one he asked the brothers to come forward and take aim. Yudhisthira came forward. Dronacarya told him, "Prepare yourself to hit that bird. Are you ready?"

"Yes." "What do you see?"

"I see the bird." "Anything else?"

"Yes. I see all of you."

"Go away."

Then another one of the brothers approached. Dronacarya told him,

"Hit the eye of the bird. That must be marked by your arrow. Take your aim.

What do you see?"

"The bird."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. The tree also."

"Oh, go away."

Then Arjuna was taken in. Dronacarya told him, "Prepare yourself."

"Yes, my Lord, I have done so."

"Do you see the bird?"

"Yes, I see."

"The tree?"

"No."

"The whole of the bird?"

"No."

"What do you see?"

"Only the head."

"The whole of the head?"

"No."

"What do you see?"

"Only the eye."

"You can see nothing else?"

"I can see nothing else."

"Yes my boy. Shoot the arrow!"

We should have that sort of aim in our life - do or die. Whatever the circumstances may come to frighten me, I won't be frightened. If my own men seem to be my enemy, that does not matter. My own is only He. And He can not tolerate that anyone else will be a partner of Him.

He is Absolute. He is the Absolute owner of me. He does not tolerate any partnership there. In this way, I must go where my spiritual conscience takes me. By God's will, friends may be converted into foes. Foes may be converted into friends, but I must stick to my ideal.

If I am of a progressive nature, then there must be elimination and there must be new beginnings. It can't be avoided in the course of our realization.

When we are in school, all do not pass; some fail and then we have to meet new classmates. Again we advance, and again we have new classmates, and old classmates may fall behind. It is quite natural.

That does not mean that we are envious of them. We are sympathetic.

We shall try our best to help them. But still it may happen. We cannot help it, but this is the nature of spiritual life. So, the absolute and relative principles are always coming in clash. They will seem to fight with one another, but the absolute should be accepted and the relative should be sacrificed.

Mental Prison

Still, the relative is necessary. A boy must put his whole faith in his primary school teacher, otherwise his progress will be hindered. He should not think that what his teacher teaches him is all false, or of a lower type. When he grows up, he will accept another teacher for higher education but that does not mean that the primary teacher is neglected or insulted. For our own interest, whatever we find which is akin to what was given to us by our guru maharaja, whatever we find that will enlighten us further, and whatever will help us to understand more clearly what we heard from our guru maharaja, must be accepted.

Otherwise, what have I taken in the prison-house of my mind, through my scholarship? God is not a finite thing. He is infinite. And as much as in the cell of my brain I have imprisoned Him, shall I stick only to that? What is this? Is my

realization a living thing, or is it dead? Is there any growth? What I have received from my spiritual master - can it grow? Or is it finished? Have I reached the infinite standard where I can progress no further?

If someone says that he has reached that standard, and that there is nothing further to be realized, then we offer our obeisances to him from far away. We are not worshipers of that. If one thinks that he is finished, that he has attained perfection - we hate it! Even an acarya should consider that he is a student, and not a finished professor who has everything. One should always think of himself as a bona fide student. We have come to realize the infinite, not a finite thing. So, this fight between finite and infinite knowledge will continue always.

Should we think, "What I have understood is absolute?" No! We have not finished with knowledge. Still, we must know. Brahma himself says, "I am fully deceived by your power, Master. I am nowhere."

Anyone who has come in connection with the infinite cannot but say this: "I am nothing." That should be the salient point. The propounder of the greatest scripture in Gaudiya Vaisnavism, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami says: purisera kita haite muni sei laghistha, "I am lower than a worm in stool." This is his statement, and he is saying so sincerely. Should we be ashamed to express our negative character, our negative development, which is the real wealth for a disciple? So, because such a negative character is shown by him, we fall at his feet.

And if someone says, "I have finished all knowledge. God, Caitanya, is my disciple," he should be shot down as the greatest enemy ever found in the world!

Chapter 6 "I Command You - Become Guru!"

It is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.31.9): *tava kathamrtam tapta-jivanam*

kavibhir iditam kalmasapaham

sravana-mangalam srimad-atatam bhuvi grnanti ye bhurida janah

"O Krsna, the nectar of your words and the narrations of your pastimes give life to us, who are always suffering in this material world. This nectar is broadcast

all over the world by great souls, and it removes all sinful reactions. It is all-auspicious and filled with spiritual power. Those who spread this message of Godhead are certainly doing the greatest relief work for human society and are the most magnanimous welfare workers."

This is what is necessary and this is what is universal. Everyone can be satisfied to the highest degree in their hearts only by the nectar of Krsna's words and the nectarine descriptions of his activities. This is because Krsna is raso vai sah, the reservoir of all pleasure, and akhila rasamrta murtih, ecstasy Himself. Krsna's very nature is sweet:

madhuram madhuram vapur asya vibhor

madhuram madhuram vadanam madhuram

madhu gandhi mrdu smitam etad aho

madhuram madhuram madhuram madhuram

"O, Lord Krsna! The beauty of your transcendental form is sweet, but your beautiful face is even sweeter. The sweet smile on your face, which is like the sweet aroma of honey, is sweeter still."

"I'm Being Nectarized!"

This verse is found in Bilvamangala Thakura's Krsna Karnamrta (92).

He says, "Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweetness. Krsna is sweetness personified. At my first sight, I thought Krsna was Cupid, who can capture everyone. But then I saw, 'No, this is not like lust personified, which can be experienced only in the material world. This is cinmaya, spiritual substance.' I see that this sweetness is spiritual in characteristic. I feel it. It is thevery gist of all sweetness. What is this?

My eyesight is being nectarized. I am experiencing nectar pouring on my eyes. Oh, Krsna has already conquered my heart. I am captured, I am captivated by sweetness personified."

marah svayam nu madhura-dyuti-mandalam nu

madhuryam eva nu mano-nayanamrtam nu

veni-mrjo nu mama jivita-vallabho nu

krsno 'yam abhyudayate mama locanaya

"My dear friends, where is Krsna, who is Cupid personified, brilliant as a kadamba flower? Where is Krsna, sweetness himself, the sweetest nectar for my eyes and mind? Where is Krsna, who loosens the hair of the gopis? He is the supreme source of divine bliss. He is my life and soul. Has he come before my eyes again?" This is Bilvamangala Thakura's statement (Krsna Karnamrta 68).

Whatever type of sorrow or affliction there may be, all different layers of painfulness will be removed. This nectar of the words and pastimes of Krsna gives us life. It gives us hope that we can live a higher life, that we were not created only to suffer in this mortal world, but to live a life which can soar up and transcend this painful life of mortality.

We have that sort of life of vitality in our own intrinsic form. The speculationists say that Krsna consciousness only does away with all sinfulness, but theirs is only an external acquaintance with Krsna consciousness. Sin is nothing in comparison with His purifying capacity. As soon as we come in contact with Krsna, even in the form of mere sound through the ear, our real welfare begins to awaken.

(sreyah kairava candrika vitaranam). Krsna consciousness is infinitely surcharged with all the resources of our welfare. And those who can distribute Krsna consciousness to the world are really benevolent and kindhearted. They give the most who give Krsna to those who are helpless and disappointed. Only this sort of transaction should be continued in the world, to save these souls suffering from the disease of mortal connection.

Divine Nectar

The descriptions about Krsna are like divine nectar. So, go on with this transaction, always giving Krsna consciousness, and if you give Krsna consciousness you will have an ample supply of Krsna consciousness. That will descend from the higher position. If you are sincere to distribute Krsna consciousness, you will have no want in your own capital. New capital will be supplied to you as much as you can give it to others. It will have connection with

the infinite source.

So go on. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says:

yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa

amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa

"Whomever you find, talk with him only about Krsna." We have no other engagement. Whomever you find, any soul you come across, try to save him from this desert of mortality. I command you. Don't be afraid; take the position of guru, the giver, and give it to everyone.

Then, Mahaprabhu says:

kabhu na vadhibe tomara visaya-taranga

punarapi ei thani pabe mora sanga

"And in this transaction, you will find my backing. If you obey my command for distribution to one and all, then you will find that I am there, backing you in this work." So, your great master has engaged you all like so many dedicated soldiers. Now you must do relief work in this world of mortality and death. Do relief work. Somehow we have to get Krsna consciousness for ourselves and also carry this news to our neighbors. Mahaprabhu says, "Whomever you meet, tell him about Krsna, and in this way, save the people." They are all under the influence of eternal mortality. Only this path is relevant to their condition; all other talks are irrelevant.

Jaws of Death

Everyone is rushing into the jaws of death. This the sum total of the news of this world; it is the only news. Every second everyone is entering the jaws of death. This is the real problem - nothing else. The whole problem, if summarized, will come to this, that every second, every atom here is entering into the jaws of death. This is the great and only danger in the world. So, all other talks are irrelevant to the real problems of life; try to help them from entering into the jaws of death. This is the only problem in the whole world.

Go forth and tell everyone about Krsna. Whatever you do, make them talk about

Krsna, Krsna, Krsna. Save yourself, and prepare yourself for the highest goal. Whenever you meet anyone, wherever you meet anyone, only talk of Krsna. All other talks are irrelevant and redundant.

Mahaprabhu says, "It is my command. Don't think that if you do this and take the position of guru, when the people come to honor you, you will forget your own ordinary position, become puffed up with pride, and go to hell; no, no, no. I order you: 'Go on!' The relief work is there. You can't stand idle as an onlooker. So, I say, 'Jump! Start relief work.' I order you to do so. And I shall take whatever responsibility is there. The whole world is dying. So, always, at every second, the real need is krsna katha. You will get my association only by obeying my orders, and discharging the duty that I am entrusting with you. You will find me there in your obedience of my order, in the discharge of the duty I impose on you."

Is it reasonable or not? Every one of us can judge. What will be the relief work to save those in the mortal world? What will give real help to the people? Not clothing them or feeding them, nothing of the kind.

Everyone is dropping down dead. Once, when I was in the Madras Math, someone came and criticized us, saying, "Oh, you are only talking about Krsna, and people are dying without food. Don't you mind?" I said, "No." He told me, "The Ramkrishna Mission is doing real relief by feeding so many. If a man dies of starvation, how will he hear you? Where will you get a listener if he dies? First make them live, feed them, and then you can tell him about Krsna."

I told him, "Suppose there is a famine. I have some food. I am distributing that to so many people. There is a great crowd before me.

If, while I am distributing food, someone from the crowd flees, what should I do? Should I distribute the food or run to catch him?" He said, "You must distribute the food; that is natural." I said, "The crowd is always ready to hear from me about Krsna. Why should I waste my time running after one man? So many people are coming to hear from me about Krsna and I cannot attend them all. Why should I stop distribution of the nectar, and run to catch one man? This is a foolish attempt."

We are interested in helping people by distributing krsna katha, and we pay no attention to any so-called danger. All are in need of this guidance. You must only

engage yourself in krsna-katha. Go on talking about Krsna, and continue with that vibration.

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was going from Puri to Vrndavana through the jungle path, the elephants, deer, and tigers were all chanting, "Krsna! Krsna!" and dancing. How? His krsna katha created such a fine vibration that it entered into the ears of the tigers, deer, and elephants and awakened their hearts. And they began to chant, "Krsna! Krsna! Krsna!" and dance. Mahaprabhu's vibration of Krsna's name was so fine and surcharged with force that the sound entered within the animals, and aroused in their hearts the innermost plane which was covered by the elephant's or tiger's body. Just like electricity, the finest current of the holy name of Krsna entered into the hearts of all the animals, and their souls were aroused. And when their souls were awakened, then they began to chant "Krsna! Krsna!"

Everywhere the environment is full of animation, and just as a ray of light, penetrates the darkness, in a similar way, the vibration of krsna katha will strike a chord within the soul and create some inspiration there towards Krsna consciousness. So continue preaching Krsna consciousness. We have no other duty, no other work. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, went the length and breadth of the world with Krsna consciousness. The fact that you have all come here is due to his earnestness. He has gone to the upper world, and so, in his name we are going on with some sort of transaction.

Chapter 7 The Initiating Spiritual Master

The spiritual master always performs his function from the platform of an intermediate devotee, whether he comes down from the position of a first class devotee to do the work of guru, or does so as a bona fide intermediate devotee. Because the work of guru is enacted from the intermediate stage, it is the duty of the madhyama-adhikari to initiate disciples.

A spiritual master may be one of three kinds. The first class guru extends one foot from the spiritual world into the material world and takes souls from here to there. The guru in the intermediate stage is situated here, but he has extended one foot there and he is taking souls to the spiritual world. The lowest class of guru has both feet here, but he clearly sees the highest plane and is trying to take

the souls from here to that plane. In this way, we may roughly conceive of three kinds of guru.

These are not three stages of Vaisnava, but three stages of guru. A first class devotee takes the position of an intermediate devotee when he descends to play the role of an acarya, one who teaches by example. He has one leg there in the spiritual world, and by the order of Krsna, he extends another leg here in the material world to do the duty of an acarya. The guru who has one leg here in the material world and extends another leg into the spiritual world is a madhyama-adhikari, or intermediate devotee. He also discharges the duty of an acarya. The lowest class of acarya has both legs here in the material world, but his vision is towards the spiritual world. He may also do the duty of an acarya. These are the gradations of acaryas, and the different stages of Vaisnavas are another thing.

They are mentioned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.45-47):

Three Kinds of Devotees

arcayam eva haraye

pujam yah sraddhayehate

na tad-bhaktesu canyesu

sa bhaktah prakrtah smrtah

"A devotee who faithfully worships the Deity, but does not properly respect the Vaisnavas or the people in general is called a materialistic devotee, and is considered to be in the lowest position of devotional service." This is the lowest class of Vaisnava. The second class of devotees is given also:

isvare tad-adhinesu

balisesu dvisatsu ca

prema-maitri-krpopeksa

yah karoti sa madhyamah

"The devotee in the intermediate stage of devotional service is called a

madhyama-adhikari. He loves the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to the innocent and disregards the envious." The highest stage of Vaisnavism according to the Srimad-Bhagavatam is described as follows:

sarva bhutesu yah pasyed

bhagavad bhavam atmanah

bhutani bhagavaty atmany

esa bhagavatottamah

"The first class devotee sees Krsna in everything, and everything within Krsna." These are three stages of devotees. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu explains these three stages in terms of those devotees who chant the holy name of Krsna. One who has even once heard or uttered the holy name of the Lord may be considered a third class devotee. One who always chants the name with faith is an intermediate devotee. And the first class devotee is so powerful that whoever sees him will feel the tendency to chant the holy name of Krsna. That is the nature of the highest kind of devotee.

The second class devotee may have some mundane touch, but he deprecates this completely and fully attends his spiritual realization.

He is fully engrossed in spiritual life. His attraction for Godhead is there, but he has not fully escaped from the influence of maya, or illusion. Although he is weak, still his attempt to help others is laudable. He has not completely disassociated himself from his mundane nature, but he is conquering it gradually. He is gaining battle after battle and moving towards Krsna consciousness. He has good will. He is a preacher. He has reached the stage just before he finally disassociates himself from this world, takes his final leave, and enters the spiritual world.

The neophyte devotee may go to the temple and worship there, strictly following the rules of the scriptures, but as soon as he is outside the temple, he may do anything and everything. In his relations with others, he may not deal in a spiritual way; scriptural dictations have only a partial influence over him. In his dealings with others, he may have no spiritual principles at all. But the intermediate devotee applies the principles of the scriptures in his ordinary life.

From the point of view of the scriptures, he considers who he should make friends with, what sort of trade he should accept for his livelihood, and how he should select his friends.

Fight Against Maya

When a devotee's social life is also affected and controlled by his spiritual principles, he becomes a second class devotee. When he adopts such a form of life, he is fit to help others. He won't be affected by foreign, unfavorable association, and because he has already practiced and is settled in that form of life, he knows how to deal with others and keep up his spiritual vitality. Because he has practiced in that way, he can be eligible to initiate disciples. He is qualified to help others because he has already transformed himself in his dealings with the outside environment. He can keep up his standard by fighting with the agents of maya. He has already proved that he has kept up his spiritual position, so he can be relied upon and entrusted with the power of acarya.

There is still another standpoint by which the qualifications of a devotee have been expressed to us in the revealed scriptures. One whose reliance, regard, and faith is in the sastra, who attentively observes all the rules and regulations and practices that are found in the scriptures, whose practices and social activities are colored by his faith in God, is an intermediate devotee. And one who acts according to his faith in Krsna, in every stage, whatever circumstances there may be is a first class devotee. His faith in Krsna is his main guidance. In whatever circumstances he may be in, with body, mind, and soul, in thought, word, and deed, in every way, he does everything for the service of Krsna. He is the topmost devotee of Krsna. So, from these different standpoints the stages of a devotee, a servant of Krsna, have been expressed to us in the scriptures.

How to See Sri Guru

Devotee: Should the disciple conceive of his gurudeva as an uttama adhikari situated on the topmost level of devotional service?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Yes, and not only should he see his gurudeva as an uttama adhikari, a devotee of the highest order, but he will even see gurudeva as the special delegation of the Lord Himself, or of his supreme potency. In the madhurya rasa, he will ultimately see his gurudeva as Radharani's delegation, Sri Rupa Manjari.

In this way, there are different visions of our spiritual master. Our vision of our spiritual master varies according to our gradual progress in Krsna consciousness. In the primary stage of devotional service, the order is given to the disciple to see the guru as Krsna himself (saksad-dharitvena samasta sastrair). Then he will see the guru as the potency of Krsna, and finally he will see him as a specific kind of potency of Krsna, according to his inner demand. He will find his spiritual master situated in a particular mood of devotion, either in servitude, friendship, parenthood, or conjugal love. This differentiation will continue until one will see Krsna himself with the internal energy, (svarupa sakti) within Krsna.

Devotee: Some people think that one must be a devotee of the highest order who has descended into this world to act on the second class platform in order to initiate disciples. They do not accept any gradation of gurus. According to them, one must seek out and take initiation only from the highest kind of guru.

Krsna's Headache

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: I also had such an idea at first but my understanding underwent some transformation and my conception changed. I did not venture to make disciples myself in the beginning, after the departure of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhupada, but I had some transformation through three events. Then I came to take up this work humbly, modestly. The other day this same question was put to me by one devotee. I told him the story of Krsna's headache. Perhaps you know the story.

Once, when Krsna was in Dwaraka, he told Narada Muni that He had been attacked with a severe headache, and the only cure was the feet-dust of His devotees. Narada went to so many devotees in Dwaraka, but no one came forward to give him any feet-dust. They said, "Oh, it is impossible. We can't do that, we can't go to hell."

Frustrated, Narada returned to Krsna. Krsna said, "Oh, I am suffering very severely now. Have you got any feet-dust?" "No, sir, no one was prepared to give feet-dust." Narada was benumbed. Krsna told him,

"You may try it in Vrndavana."

At once, Narada intimated everything to the gopis, and the gopis immediately came with feet-dust. They said, "Krsna is suffering? He needs feet-dust? Please take our feet-dust and go immediately."

Narada was astounded. "What is the matter?" he thought, "No devotees would offer Krsna any dust from their feet, but these people are doing it." He told them, "Do you know what is the consequence of your actions?" The gopis replied "Yes. Eternal hell. We don't care for that! If slight relief is there for our Lord, that is our only concern."

This is one point that came to my mind at that time. And another was this: Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa. "On my order, become guru, and deliver the land." So, we should think, "I am fallible, but I am confident that what my guru has given to me is an uncommon, vital, and nectarine thing. And he has asked me to give it to others. It does not matter. I shall take the risk: He has ordered me. I am his servant. He will look after me." With this spirit of risk, the disciple will approach the responsibility thinking, "I may go to hell, but I must carry out the order of my gurudeva. I may die, but I must carry out the order of my commander." With this spirit he is to approach the task, and there will be no danger if this consciousness is maintained; but if he deviates from that connection and goes self-seeking for a mundane purpose, he'll be doomed.

Otherwise, no destruction can touch him.

This internal spirit should be maintained, and that is the real qualification of a disciple: "Yes, I am ready to die to carry out the order of my gurudeva. I feel that this is nectar, and I must distribute it to others to save them."

Ramanuja's Secret Mantra

There is another example of this spirit of risk, in Ramanuja's case.

There was an alwar, a South Indian guru who had the highest type of mantra. Ramanuja wanted that mantra from him. The alwar told Ramanuja, "If you don't disclose this mantra to anyone, then I shall reveal it to you." Ramanuja agreed, and with this pledge, Ramanuja approached him and received the mantra. It had already been announced to the public that Ramanuja was receiving that mantra, and so many people were standing outside waiting. They had heard that Ramanuja had accepted this condition and received the mantra from that guru. As soon as Ramanuja came out, the mob that was waiting there impatiently began asking him, "What kind of mantra has he given you? What is the mantra? Is it of the highest order that will deliver us all?"

"Yes."

"Then what is it?"

"This is the mantra."

He gave it out, and his guru chastised him. "What have you done?

Don't you know what is the result?" "Yes, I know: eternal hell, but your mantra cannot but be fruitful, so they will be saved, although I may go to hell." If you can take this sort of risk, your guru will bless you, and you cannot be doomed. This sort of risk should be taken by the disciple and only on the force, on the basis of that spiritual inspiration. If he does so, he can never be doomed. The eye of the Lord is there. God is there. Guru is there. He cannot but be saved.

They cannot leave him in danger and relish thinking, "The person who is carrying out our orders is going to hell." Can they tolerate such a thing? Are our guardians living or are they dead?

We must be so much selfless that we can think, "I may go to hell, but I must carry out my guru's order. So, through me, the work may go on."

This sort of conviction in the process, in the mantra, gives us the strength to carry out the work of acarya. If I think, "This medicine is helping me; I am in the curing process, and this medicine is helping me," then, if I see a similar case, I may hand the medicine over to him.

Jiva Goswami says jnana sathya vittha sathya. If I have some money and another person is suffering with no money, if I keep tight my money, and he lies fasting without food, then I'll be responsible for his suffering. So, if I have some knowledge, if I can help my neighbor, but don't do that, I'll be responsible. By not helping him, I commit an offense against society.

Once I asked one doctor, "Do you know about disease perfectly? Then why do you venture to treat a patient? You have meager knowledge.

You don't know his body fully. You treat him, and you are wrong."

The doctor submitted to me. But an answer came in my mind that if we require every doctor to perfectly know everything about disease, then the whole method

of treatment will vanish. Because they are all half-knowing and there is not anyone to be found in full knowledge, should this curing process be abolished? It is not possible. So in the case of all culture, one should help others in good faith.

In good faith, with whatever knowledge we have, we must sincerely help others. In that spirit one may take up the work of acarya, otherwise he will be blamed. But we must be careful that whenever a guru of superior quality is there, we must help others to accept him.

We must not be a trespasser. It is also mentioned in the Hari Bhakti Vilasa that when a greater person is available, those of a lower type should not venture to make disciples. Suppose a farmer has fertile land and two kinds of seed. The good seed should be planted first. If the better seed is not available, then ordinary seeds may be sown. For the sake of the harvest, the better seed should be given the first chance. If we are detached, if we are pure in heart, and if we are selfless, the better seed should always be sown first. The lower kind of seed should be withdrawn. So, when a higher type of guru is available to any circle, the lower type of guru should not interfere.

Lowest of the Low

Devotee: But a devotee always thinks of himself as the lowest, so he will always want to take someone to the higher guru.

Sridhara Maharaja: The degree of devotion to Krsna will take us to the point of thinking, "I am nothing, I am the lowest of the low." But when the inspiration to act as guru will flow, the necessity to teach will come to us through the order of Krsna: "You have to do it." In that case, Krsna wants to do it. It is His flow. Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, "Sanatana, Krsna's grace is flowing through me to you; it is passing through me, but I don't understand all these words." I feel something like that. I am carrying out my acarya's order. Being so low, still I have accepted this duty as I have been ordered by my acarya to do. With this necessity within, one may do the work of an acarya.

It is not only external, but internal also. The acarya has asked us, "Go on with the preaching; you are qualified. If you don't do so, then why did I give it to you? As I spread this message, you must also spread it." If one feels such a sincere urge within h is heart, he must do that work. If we do not serve society with whatever we have imbibed from him, then we will be responsible to our

guru. He will chastise us saying, "You have taken so much energy from me, and now you are keeping it within you? You must let this loose to help others." If one gets this sort of inspiration, he should try to fulfill the order, but still, difficulty is there. To become a guru, to capture the position of a guru, the respect of guru, that is one thing; to discharge the duty is another.

Sincerity is necessary. This is of course difficult. There is no doubt that it is difficult; if one is unsuccessful, he will be lost, and others will also be lost. In the name of helping others he will deceive others, if he himself is full of deceit. So, we must be careful about what we have received from our guru, and we must also take care to see whether we are eligible to discharge this duty, whether we are eligible to do good to others.

The Trap to Capture Guru

Devotee: You can give spiritual guidance without giving initiation. You can explain what you heard from your spiritual master to others.So, what is the necessity of giving initiation?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: That is also a trap to catch the guru. You give instructions on spiritual life to others, and those that take your instructions will say, "I cannot go to anyone else. I can accept only what I have heard from you, I cannot accept anyone to be guru other than you. "

Devotee: But you can say, "If you accept me, then I tell you to accept him."

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: If he sincerely feels so, he can say, "If you have real faith in me, then I tell you to go to that gentleman." He may say this, if he sincerely believes that another person is superior to him.

But if he sees that within the society, the constitutional acarya is going down, he will think, "How can I recommend this sincere gentleman to connect with him?" At that time, he will have to come down himself and take the responsibility of continuing the work of his guru. It all depends on sincere realization.

Chapter 8 Separation from Sri Guru

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada advised his

senior disciples that if the need arose to consult higher spiritual authority after his disappearance, his senior godbrother Srila Sridhara Maharaja should be consulted. On more than one occasion he said, "I consider Srila Sridhara Maharaja to be my siksa-guru, instructing spiritual master, so what to speak of the benefit that others can have from his association." Just after his disappearance, his senior disciples approached Srila Sridhara Maharaja and asked his advice on how to guide the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. The following is an excerpt of their conversations.

Devotee: After the departure of our beloved spiritual master, we have come here to offer our respects to you as well as to hear your highly esteemed advice on certain matters, if you'd be kind enough.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: The disappearance of the spiritual master is mentioned in the sastra with an example. The disciple is like a lotus.

The spiritual master is like the water around the lotus, just as in a pond or a lake. Your late gurudeva's position is like water. And Krsna is like the sun. As long as the lotus is floating on the water, the sun will nourish the lotus. But if the water vanishes, that very sun will burn the lotus. Without water, the Krsna sun will burn the lotus. Without the help of the guru, the disciple is nowhere.

Without Guru, All is Void

Raghunatha Dasa Goswami has said, "In the absence of my gurudeva, Govardhana hill, the representation of Krsna Himself, seems to me just like a big python coming to devour me. And Radha-kunda, the holiest place of divinity of the Gaudiya-sampradaya, seems like a tiger's mouth coming to devour me. They are giving me so much excitement in the absence of my gurudeva, my dearest and highest spiritual guardian. My gurudeva, who has the most intense affection for me is not here. How can it be? Everything is void. All has vanished with his departure." Such a deep sense of separation will come in the heart of a sincere disciple.

Once, one of your devotees said in his lecture that separation is the highest realization. I was very happy to hear from his lips that separation (vipralambha) is the highest attainment. Without separation, nothing else can come to us. The anticipation of meeting Krsna will appear to us as vipralambha, so vipralambha is the most auspicious thing pertaining to Krsna consciousness. And we can have

Krsna's connection also in that separation. So, the safest and most fearless position is vipralambha. If we can stand firm and retain the memory of gurudeva in his separation, then we will have passed the highest test.

Devotee: In our spiritual master's lifetime he was seen as the absolute authority above all, including our governing body commission. How should we understand the position of the new spiritual masters and their relationships with their godbrothers and disciples?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: The position of the acarya with his disciples must be absolute; with his disciples, he will have absolute authority. Still, he must be careful not to become mad with authority.

Authority is a part of pratistha, name and fame. There is also another tendency. When a guru comes in connection with vatsalya-rasa, the mood of guardianship over his disciples, his friendly relation with the godbrothers decreases, some special discrimination arises and stealthily he is drawn to his disciples, indifferently neglecting his connection with his godbrothers. This tendency is sure to come, and it is difficult to keep up the balance. So, the brothers are neglected, and the sons get more attention. In this way the guru becomes partial.

When he comes in close connection with his disciples, he has freedom; he is given an opportunity of absolute mastership. In that position, it is very difficult

for him to keep up his purity. Because of that temptation there is the possibility of going down from the plane of acarya.

Guru is All in All

Autocracy and democracy do not go well together. Our system is autocratic. Guru is all in all. Our submission to guru is unconditional.

If a disciple sees that his guru's powers are being restricted by other Vaisnavas, it will create a great disturbance in his mind, a disturbance to his absolute faith in his guru. This is where the Krsna conception of Godhead comes to our relief. He whom we think to be supreme-most - Krsna - Yasoda is whipping him. He is carrying Nanda's shoes on his head, and he is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this way we can adjust everything. Both the absolute faith and the relative position of the non-absolute these two things should be harmonized.

The guru should be recognized by impartial judgement. Everyone thinks that his own mother is the most affectionate. But when a comparison is drawn between two mothers to see who is more affectionate, an impartial criterion will be applied. This is called tatastha-vicara: an impartial comparison of relative and absolute considerations. When the two are weighed, the absolute calculation will always have the greater value.

The position of acarya is very intricate. It is very difficult to bring an acarya under rule. You see, that is our practical experience. You please hear and note this. The position of acarya is a relative thing, and the position of the disciple is also relative, just like the relationship between mother and child, father and son, wife and husband. Although to his godbrothers a guru will be seen in a relative position, to his disciple, the guru is absolute. So to adjust between the relative and absolute is a difficult thing; it is an eternal problem. Even in krsna-lila there is enmity between madhurya-rasa and vatsalya-rasa, but when the absolute consideration comes, both rasas must be included within the fold.

Guru: More than God

To a disciple, his guru's position is Supreme, even more than God.

This is said in the scriptures. The guru is more near and dear to us than God Himself. God has many things to deal with, but guru is concerned only with my welfare. The guru's position is more helpful to the disciple than God. If within

your society, you want a natural growth of the disciple's regard for the guru and the Absolute Truth, such room must be allowed in your constitution, if the constitution is to live at all.

Law is not everything. The law of your society should be accommodating to nurture divine sentiment, otherwise it is no law.

Law should promote faith. Sastra's jurisdiction is limited. It is meant only to promote love, and when love comes, it will be free. Smooth, harmonious working is possible only in the area of love. Srila Rupa Goswami says that vaidhi-bhakti, devotion under the guidance of sastra, or laws and rules, is helpful only to a certain extent. It will help the inner awakening of love and affection and then retire. Law will retire, giving room to the spontaneous flow of love. Law is necessary, especially in the lower stages, but it should make room for free movement in the relationship. Freedom is the highest thing. Free service is raga-marga, and that is service proper, not service that is regulated and coerced and pressed by law. That is not service. Our aim is Vrndavana. So, we want free service. Without freedom, service is not valuable. Forced labor is no labor; a labor of love is required. And that is the thing for which all are out. Let us essentially think that we are all out not only for the constitution, but the thing for which the constitution has been made; we are out for that high object of life: divine love. The constitution should promote that aim. With this feeling we should go on. Newcomers are coming with their faith, and their faith should be encouraged and also adjusted so that the faith of one person may not disturb another.

Messiahs of Free Faith

No law should go to limit or control the acarya, for then the sraddha of the disciple will vanish, and all will be a mechanized machine. Rather the whole thing will be reduced to matter. We are the messiahs of developing free internal faith in the Lord. Faith, that is to be nurtured.

That sort of creeper should be planted in the garden of the heart and watered and nourished. The very characteristic of faith must not be lost by infringement, by over-pressure of the laws and rules. The free flow of the heart must be kept. The movement of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is more of heart than of intellect. We should always consider this. The intellect must not check the free flow of the heart.

We must always remember that. Free love and free faith are the only things, the most valuable things for which we have come out of our own house and joined the mission. This purity of purpose should always be kept intact. Of course, some help from law and regulation is necessary, but not so much as to check the growth of our vitality. We must promote vitality. The real spirit, the real purpose of the mission should be given first hand. And lenient dealings are necessary amongst you. It is said, "If the tongue is cut by the tooth, should I pull out the tooth?" You are one organic whole; your dealings should not be such that the forgiveness of love is forgotten. The giving of love will conquer more than the giving of law. What is the need of so much formality and fashion, when ultimately we are all servants of the Lord?

The acarya faces two dangers. The first is partiality. Partiality means full freedom with his disciples. This relationship is also more attractive to him. The second danger is deviation. So, deviation and partiality - these two things can take down the acarya. These are the two enemies of an acarya. And one who takes that position must be particularly careful about these things. The position of an acarya is dangerous. It is full of temptations. Therefore, a strong, sincere indomitable desire for the upper aspirations of Krsna consciousness is the indispensable necessity in an acarya. Otherwise, he can't maintain his position. He will go down. He has become master and will think, "I am the master of all I survey." In a particular circle, he is monarch.

And monarchy can bring madness. That is a great temptation. If one is not sufficiently conscious of this fact, he will not be able to maintain his position. For one who has monarchy over men and money, it is very difficult to maintain a position as a servitor. The ego of mastership which is generally found within all of us comes to attack the guru. After all, we are wandering in the land of exploitation.

Therefore, we should be very wakeful and scrutinizing in our self-analysis. The general symptom of health is that the more one will go up, the more he will think, "I am going down." This indirect method of measurement may be applied to measure our internal advancement.

Externally one may maintain a superior position, but internally he should always be thinking, "O my Lord! I am in want. Give more grace to me! I can't maintain my position."

Money, Women, and Fame

It is a great misfortune if a Vaisnava guru strays from the line. It is rare, but occasionally it may be found. Generally the symptoms of deviation fall into three different classes: kanaka, kamini, and pratistha: money, women, and reputation. First, a guru loses his attraction for his own guru and sastra-upadesa, the advice of the sastra. Then, what he previously expressed, quoting the scriptures and the words of his own guru, gradually becomes absent in him. His attraction for the higher thing fades. That is pratistha, prestige.

Kanaka, kamini, pratistha: money, women, and name and fame - these are the three tests to be put everywhere to see whether one is a sadhu or not, or what degree of sadhu he is. The first thing is deviation from his higher gurus. That should be detected. That is pratistha, pride.

Then, he will show more tendency to amass money and not to spend it. Money may be collected, but that must be distributed for the service of the sampradaya, for the service of the Vaisnavas. But amassing money - this is the second sign of deviation. The third is attraction towards the ladies. Of course, he may come in connection with money and women and also with the honor from his disciples. That is also necessary, but only for the purpose of divine object, divine aim, not for himself. But if we can detect that he is utilizing all these things for his personal interest and not for the cause of the sampradaya, then we should be careful.

In the beginning, we may neglect some occasional problems; some instances of these kinds of deviations may be ignored. But if we find that they are becoming more prevalent, then we must inspect the situation carefully. And we are to bring it to persons similar to my position. And after consultation, we can take the matter to higher sources and consult other acaryas who are reliable. When we find that what appeared to us first in a small way is real, injurious, and of a big magnitude, and that our spiritual master is going down, then we must act to save ourselves. We must try to take steps which may save us from that epidemic contamination. We must try to save ourselves. And we must also try to save others who might fall prey to the same exploitation as us. That must be done in all sincerity. There is the possibility; it is mentioned in the sastras and so many practical examples are also there. So, we must not make progress in a slumber, but we must go forward with our eyes always opened.

Abandoning Bogus Gurus

Devotee: If the initiating guru falls down from the path, what should the disciple do?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: He may take shelter of the holy name of Krsna again and wait for some time. If the guru was at first a sincere disciple of his spiritual master, and now as a result of some offenses he is being neglected by his guru, he may be led astray for some time.

But he may return to the standard again. Still, it is said in the Mahabharata (Udyoga-parva 179.25):

guror apy avaliptasya

karyakaryam ajanatah

utpatha-prathipannasya

parityago vidhiyate

"A guru who does not know what is to be done and what is not to be done, who has left the path of devotional service, should be abandoned." This is found in Bhisma's statement in the Mahabharata.

Bhisma is one of the twelve mahajanas, and this is his statement to his astra-guru, Parasurama.

Jiva Goswami says that if the guru goes astray he should be abandoned, but there may be circumstances where, by the inconceivable desire of Krsna, the guru may go astray for a time and then come back again. In that case, the disciple should wait for some time. It is very unfortunate for the disciple when such things happen.

You will find this elaborately dealt with in the Harinama-cintamani of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. If a son leaves home and disobeys his father, the father may be indifferent to him; he may exclude him from the will. If, however, the son returns after some time and is again obedient, then he may collect his inheritance. In a similar way, a spiritual master may disobey his guru, and then his guru may be indifferent to him for some time, but again if he sets himself

right, he will not be disinherited. This is explained in Bhagavad-gita (api cet suduracaro). So we should not deal very abruptly with these unfortunate incidents, but we should wait and see. Everything must be done judiciously.

In trying to understand the relationships between guru and godbrother and guru and disciple, we will find very subtle points of sentiment.

Just as when Krsna entered into the arena of Kamsa, he appeared differently to different persons, the disciples will have one view of their guru and his godbrothers will have another view and disposition.

The disciples of a genuine guru will see their guru as being with Krsna, but that may not be seen to his godbrothers. In madhurya-rasa, Krsna is seen in one way, and in vatsalya-rasa, Mother Yasoda sees him in another way. The servants see him in another way. The rsis like Gargamuni will see him in another way. As Krsna likes to show himself, he will be seen.

You may see the guru in your own way, but still, you'll have to behave in such a way that the newcomer's faith will not be disturbed. The newcomers should always be encouraged, because it is very difficult for a fallen soul to collect his faith and regard and offer it to the guru.

It should be our concern that they collect their maximum regard and offer it to the guru. On the other hand, I may have my own conception about my godbrother. I may foster that within my heart. As much as possible I should try not to disturb his disciples. If, unfortunately, an acarya falls, and proves himself to be lacking in that capacity, then if that comes to a sufficient degree, some steps may be taken; we may have to take some unhappy action. But let God save us from that disastrous condition. That should be our feeling.

Otherwise, as long as possible, the rank should be respected. Both the relative and absolute consideration go side by side. The disciples should be encouraged by the relative consideration mostly. And godbrothers will have more feel for the absolute consideration. But still, they shouldn't disturb the newcomers in their premier position.

Even if you think that the person performing the function of acarya is lower in qualification (adhikara) than you, still you should formally give some special honor to him because he is in that position. The son may be the judge, and the father may be the lawyer, but the father must give respect to the son. He must

give respect to the chair. So that kind of adjustment should be kept in the mission. When you are alone, the acarya brother and his non-acarya brother can mix freely. You can give a slap to his face. But when publicly amongst his disciples, you must show that sort of behavior. Respectful conduct should be publicly maintained to keep up the peace of the mission.

Vyasa...May Not Know

Devotee: Although the disciples should regard the guru as absolute and of the highest level of spiritual attainment, how should he view his own position?

Sridhara Maharaja: Sridhara Swami wrote a commentary on the Srimad-Bhagavatam. It was a little different from the previous commentaries, so the scholars, especially the Sankarites, refused to accept that commentary as universal. They put it to the test. They left the commentary in the temple of Visvanatha, Lord Siva, and agreed that if he accepted the commentary, they would all accept. Then, from the Siva temple, this verse was revealed: aham vedmi suko vetti, vyaso vetti na vetti va. "The real purpose of the Srimad-Bhagavatam is very difficult to conceive," Lord Siva says. "I know the true purpose of Bhagavatam; Sukadeva, the son and disciple of Vyasadeva, knows it thoroughly, and the author of the Bhagavatam, Srila Vyasadeva, may or may not know the meaning."

When teaching Sanatana Goswami, Mahaprabhu said, "Sanatana, Krsna is going to give His kindness to you through me. I am talking to you like a madman. I feel many things are passing through me to you.

But I do not know that I myself have that thing." It is possible. It is wonderful, but still we find it there. It is not unreasonable, although it is not understandable.

You see, when the Second World War broke out, in Dalhousie Square in Calcutta, there was a popular government poster. A military uniform was painted on the wall. Beneath it was a saying, "Just wear this uniform, and the uniform will show you what you must do." So, when a sincere man has taken a particular charge, he will somehow find out what are the duties of his post. He is sincere. And God will help. God helps those who help themselves. You have taken the charge, and that charge has come not only as a chance, but there is some underground link. Then if you try to go on, help will come to

you. He's not a cheat. You have sincerely taken this responsibility, as given to

you by your master, and the master is not a cheat. He will come to help you with all his might, saying, "Do this. I'm helping; I am at your back." When we are all sincere, things will happen like this.

Chapter 9 Guru and Mantra Guru

Student: I have heard that one has an eternal connection with the spiritual master who first initiates one into the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra (harinama guru). Does he have a similar connection with the mantra guru?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Yes. We may see it as similar, with a slight difference.

Student: Some devotees who took harinama initiation from Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada later took their gayatri mantra initiation from one of his disciples. Can you explain the distinction between the two initiations and how a disciple should view his relationship with two different spiritual masters?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: The first importance should be given to the nama guru, or the guru who initiates one into the chanting of the holy name of Krsna, and second to the guru who gives initiation into the gayatri mantra. The diksa guru, initiating spiritual master, must be shown respect, and then all the other disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. First, honor must be shown to Prabhupada, who is the nama guru, the guru of guru, the second honor will go to the diksa guru, and then to the rest, accommodating all. They should all be recognized according to their status.

Mantra: Circle within a Circle

Jiva Goswami has written that the name of Krsna is the principle thing in the gayatri mantra. Within the mantra, there are also so many other words, but the name is the most important. If the name of Krsna is taken away, and replaced with some other name, the whole thing will be rotten. This is the decision of Jiva Goswami. The holy name of Krsna is all in all. The holy name of Krsna is there in the gayatri mantra, and so many other words are couched there. But if Krsna's name is taken away and replaced with the name of Siva, then the whole thing will go to Siva. The holy name is the all-important factor.

The holy name of Krsna is so important that even the gayatri mantra may not be necessary. It is said: na ca sat kriya, na dikse na ca purascarya manadilate mantrayam rasana spri hanato sri krsna namatmaka: "One need not undergo all the purificatory processes, or follow the six ritualistic ceremonies mentioned in the Vedas for pious life; one need not even take initiation into the gayatri mantra. If one simply chants the holy name of Krsna without offense, everything will be successful." The holy name of Krsna is the most important consideration. The gayatri mantra may not even be necessary.

We accept the mantra only to help the nama-bhajana, the worship of the holy name. Otherwise, it may not be necessary at all. It has been judged in such a way. The name alone can do everything for a person.

It is full and complete. The mantra helps us to do away with the aparadhas, offenses, and the abhasa, or hazy conceptions in our bhajana. The mantra comes to help us only so far.

An example is given of larger and smaller circles. The holy name of Krsna is the larger circle. It extends from the highest to the lowest.

The mantra circle is a smaller circle within the larger circle. The mantra cannot reach to the lowest point. The holy name can extend itself down to the lowest position. The mantra gives us entrance into liberation, and then the name carries us further. This is the nature of our connection with the mantra and the name.

The name extends to the lowest position, to the candalas and yavanas.

Everyone can receive the name. But everyone is not eligible for the gayatri mantra. Only after one has reached a developed stage can the mantra be conferred upon him. And the mantra's jurisdiction will be finished when liberation is attained. In the Caitanya-caritamrta (Adi.

7.73):

krsna-mantra haite habe samsara mocana

krsna-nama haite pabe krsnera carana

"The Krsna gayatri mantra liberates one from repeated birth and death in this world; the holy name of Krsna gives one shelter at the lotus feet of Krsna." The

gayatri mantra helps us achieve liberation, and then the mantra retires. After giving us liberation, the mantra is finished. But the name will continue all along, from the lowest to the highest.

Inchanting the name, there is no mention of any petition - it is an address only. We should not chant with the mentality that, "I want this." We must simply chant the name spontaneously. That will encourage good will in us. So, because the function of the mantra is limited, but the name is all-important, the nama guru will be honored first, and next, the mantra guru, and then the other Vaisnavas.

Godbrother Gurus

Student: How should a devotee who has taken second initiation from a godbrother, regard his godbrother - as godbrother or guru?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: It is inconceivably, simultaneously, one and different. Generally that godbrother will be seen as guru, according to the disciple's present stage, but if the disciple transcends, and goes to his previous history, then he will see him more as a godbrother. But generally, in his present stage, he will see him as guru, and in the background, godbrother.

Student: You said, the harinama continues after the liberated condition. So, does the gayatri mantra guru continue any activity with the devotee beyond the point of liberation?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: When he returns to the spiritual world, even the chanting of the holy name will be in the background, and the function of performing other services will come in the foreground.

When one enters the Lord's domain, he will be given some function there in the service of Krsna, and that will be very conspicuous and prominent. At that time, the name will be in the background. When one goes to a particular group in a particular rasa, like sakhya rasa, then he will be given a specific duty under a group-leader like Subala, or Baladeva. His service will have the first importance, and the name will be in the background, helping, energizing. And there, all will be seen as guru, but still, there is a hierarchy. It is a family life. The guru's guru is there, but the disciple will work under his own boss who has his boss. He will receive direction from his immediate superior. In this way, the hierarchy is there, and the disciple will gradually be transformed by that sort of function. Everyone is under some servitor, and their immediate duty will be to attend that servitor

and his orders.

Student: Many devotees cannot understand how it is that someone can have two gurus.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: That is because they are situated in a formal position, but when they enter into the substantial spiritual realization, they will not have such a grievance because they will see what is guru. Guru means one who has come to give Krsna consciousness. The formal difference will be reduced when one can catch the very substance of the teachings for which the guru is respected. When one is intimately connected with the thread of divine love which the guru comes to impart to us, he will accept it, wherever it comes from. He will see it as a friendly relation, not antagonistic, but cooperative.

Although separate in figure, at heart both of the gurus are the same because they have a common cause. They have not come to fight with one another; they have come to fight only with the agents of Satan. If we can recognize the real thing for which we are approaching the guru, then we will understand how to make the adjustment in our relationship with the siksa guru, diksa guru, and vartma-pradarsaka guru.

We are infinitely indebted to all our gurus. We are helpless. What can we do? They are benevolent, they are infinitely gracious, they are my guardians. I may have many guardians; they are to look after my welfare, they have not come to destroy me.

Student: Krsna descends with his associates, friends, and paraphernalia. Is this true of the guru also?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Yes, but his associates were mostly recruited; very few may be his eternal company.

Self-effulgent and Self-evident

Student: How will we recognize the guru if he appears before us in another form or in a different body?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya argued that Sri Caitanyedeva could not have been an incarnation. Gopinatha Acarya told him, "You do not know the sastra." "No, no," Sarvabhauma said, "In the scriptures it

is mentioned that the Lord does not appear in Kali-yuga, but only in three ages and is therefore known as Triyuga."

Gopinatha Acarya replied, "You think that you know so much about sastra, but in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and Mahabharata, there is direct mention of the avatara of Kali-yuga. Have you no knowledge, no recognition of that?" Then Sarvabhauma apparently defeated, said, "You go and take prasadam, and afterwards come and teach me."

Then Gopinatha said, "Not by the dint of one's study or intelligence can one understand God, but only through his grace" (*athapi te deva padambhuja-dvaya-prasada lesanugrhita eva hi*).

Then Sarvabhauma said, "You say that you have that grace, and I do not? What is your reasoning behind this? You say that you have the grace of the Lord because you say that he is an incarnation. And because I can't give recognition to that, I have no grace? What is the proof of this?" Then Gopinatha Acarya replied, *acarya kahe vastu visaye haya vastu-jnana vastu-tattva-jnana haya krpate pramana* (Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya 6. 89). "It is evident that I have the grace of the Lord, because I know him, and that you have not, because you deny him." The answer to your question is given here. Our own inner experience, our internal satisfaction, our connection or acquaintance with reality is the real evidence; nothing external can give any real proof.

Our guru maharaja gave the example that if one is born in the darkness of a dungeon, and someone proposes "Let us go see the sun," then the prisoner will carry a lantern in his hand saying "Oh, you will show me the sun?"

"Yes. Come with me. Leave your lantern behind. No light is necessary to see the sun."

"Are you trying to fool me? Nothing can be seen without the help of a light."

His friend will catch him and forcibly take the prisoner into the sunlight. "Do you see the sun?" And the prisoner will say, "Oh, this is the sun! By sunlight alone we can see the sun." One will have that sort of experience when he comes in connection with the truth. Neither calculation, nor evidence, nor witness, but only direct experience is proof that Krsna is there, like the sun.

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is said, atma parijnanamayo: what to speak of

Krsna, even the conscious unit is self-effulgent. A certain section says, "There is God. Surely He exists." Others say, "No, there is no God, He never existed." This quarrel is useless; still it will continue. In a particular section this argument will have no end. Those who have no eyes will be unable to see the sun. They will say there is no sun (mattah para-nistat amsa-lokam). This misconception will continue for those who deny the existence of both the soul and the Supreme soul. For those who have direct experience, however, there is no question: it exists! But for the owl section who cannot admit the existence of the sun, the sun does not exist. It is something like that.

Our own realization of a thing will be the greatest proof of its existence: vastu-tattva-jnana haya krpate.

One may be born blind, but if somehow or other his eyes are opened, he will be astonished to see the particular aspects of the environment.

But if one has no vision, he can see no color or figure. Those who have vision will feel, "How can I deny the fact? I have seen it. I am feeling it, it is so magnanimous, so great and so benevolent, I can't deny all these things. You are unfortunate; you cannot see." Some see, some cannot see. In the same place, one can see, another cannot.

Those to whom Krsna wishes to reveal himself can see him; others cannot.

The Universal Form

In the assembly of the Kurus, when Krsna went to Duryodhana's party with a proposal for peace between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, Duryodhana thought, "Now we have our golden chance. If I can put Krsna in the prison-house now, then the Pandavas will die broken-hearted, and there will be no question of fighting with them." The Kauravas also joined in the scheme, and they told Duhsasana, "Go and bind Krsna with this rope." Duhsasana came with the rope in his hand and tried to bind Krsna. Satyaki, Krsna's attendant, was there, and he furiously came at Duhsasana with a sword Krsna peacefully caught hold of his hand, and began to manifest himself in such a way that it perplexed Duhsasana.

When Duhsasana saw the universal form displayed by Krsna, he thought, "So many figures appear before me. On whom shall I put the rope? Who shall I bind down?" So many figures were displayed by Krsna in his universal form. On one

side there was Baladeva and on another side stood Arjuna, and so many revered rsis, chanting Krsna's name. Duhsasana was perplexed. And Bhisma and Drona began to sing in praise of Krsna. Everyone thought, "What is this? This is a magnificent vision, with so many faces!" The whole atmosphere was filled with the divine spirit. Then, Devarsi Narada and so many rsis began to chant in praise of Krsna. And in this way Krsna manifested his universal form before the assembly.

Dhrtarastra was blind, but he could hear them all praising Krsna, and thought to himself, "Some sort of wonderful things are happening around me, but I can't see." And so, he prayed to Krsna. "O Lord, for the moment please remove my blindness. I would like to see your great manifestation. Afterwards, you can make me blind again, but at least for the time being, remove my blindness." Krsna told him, "There is no necessity ofremoving your blindness. I say that you can see, and you can see." By the Lord's will alone, even physical blindness was no bar to seeing that great manifestation of Krsna. So,

the physical eye can't see God: only the divine eye can see him. And by the will of Krsna, the divine eye was temporarily given to Dhrtarastra. His blindness did not stand in the way of his vision, and he could see Krsna.

Ultrasonic Sound

The ability to recognize divinity descends from above. We cannot see God with our mundane senses. What to speak of being able to see the infinite, our senses are so limited that our ears can only hear sound of a particular wavelength. We are told that the sun, the moon, and all the stars and planets are all revolving and creating a huge sound, but our ears cannot hear that high degree of ultrasonic sound. Nor can we hear subsonic sound with our ears. Our eyes are designed to catch only a particular wavelength of light. We cannot see either ultraviolet or infrared light. Our material senses are limited to a particular plane of perception.

Student: The guru accepts the responsibility to take his disciples back to godhead. So, when the guru departs, how does the disciple maintain contact with the guru?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: You see, it comes to the same point. Who is guru? And why is he guru? Guru, sastra, and sadhu are one and the same thing, and we have to appreciate that. Otherwise, should we think that our onward march will

be guaranteed only by the vision of our eyes? The photo of our spiritual master is not our guru, although the photo has some connection with the real guru. The eye experience and the ear experience of a person is not the whole experience. The real experience is through the words, the idea that the guru has given. That is Krsna consciousness.

If I have a real interest in Krsna consciousness, I have to adjust all other things accordingly. Otherwise, if I miss the real thing that the guru came to give me, everything will be dull idol worship. To follow the form alone will be idolatry. There are so many human figures; why is he guru? Because he is a mediator, a medium of divine knowledge. That is the criterion to be tested everywhere. Put this test anywhere and everywhere. What is the interest for which we came to Krsna consciousness? And what is Krsna consciousness? There is your guru. He is guru only because he is in Krsna consciousness, and there are different degrees of Krsna consciousness. So, we must not make much about the form.

A Religious Jungle

Student: Why are there so many different religions in the world?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: In the Srimad-Bhagavatam Uddhava posed this same question, "Why in the name of religion are there so many "isms" in the world. Will every "ism" that is found here independently take me to the goal? Or is there any gradation?" Krsna told him, "When the creation began, I transmitted the truths of religion into the heart of Brahma, the creator, and from Brahma, that came to his disciples. But according to the different capacity of those disciples, what they received was a little changed when they delivered it to others. When I gave it to Brahma, that knowledge was one. Brahma told his disciples, and when they received it in the soil of their heart, it entered, but with some modification. Again, when they gave delivery to their disciples there was more modification." It became lost due to the vitiating nature of the mundane plane. One point is the difference in the receiver and another, in the succession.

So, gradually the truth was modified, and now we see that the religious world is a jungle. Some give stress on penance, some on charity, some this, some that. So many branches of religion have sprung up. And antagonistic, ascending opinions like atheism have also grown from the human mind to oppose those modified descending opinions. So, now we find there is a jungle.

Krsna appears now and then to reestablish the principles of religion.

(*yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati*). When religion becomes extremely degraded, Krsna comes again, or sends his representative, telling him, "Go and set it right."

There must be religious differences, but one who can catch the real internal meaning of the truth will be saved. Others will be misguided, and it will be a long time before they are delivered. Once having a real connection with a bona fide guru, he won't be lost. In this way Krsna answered Uddhava's question in the Eleventh Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, and it is quite intelligible. It is neither unreasonable nor dogmatic. If we are sincere, we won't be lost.

The Lady and the Mullah

Every disciple cannot catch the real spirit of the advice of the guru.

There is a story. A Mohammedan mullah used to explain the Koran regularly. In his audience one old lady used to take her seat in the corner, and as long as the mullah read the Koran, the lady would weep. Tears would run down her cheeks profusely, so much so that one day the mullah met that lady and asked her, "What do you find in my lectures that you are so much impressed with? Whenever I cast my glance at you, I find your eyes are shedding tears profusely. What do you find in my lectures that moves you so?"

To this, the old lady answered, "I had one she-goat, and her beard was just like yours. When she took her food, she would move her head on the grass just as you move your head. You remind me of my dear she-goat. She was very much affectionate to me. I can't stand to think of her without shedding tears, and for that purpose, I come to see your lecture."

Krsna Himself came and went unrecognized by many. In the case of Jesus also, we find that Judas, one of His twelve disciples, was a traitor. Jesus said, disappointed, "The one who will betray me is amongst the twelve of you." So, should we think that because we have come to a great man, now we have attained everything, devoured everything? It is not such an easy thing. We have only a slight connection with the infinite and we have to progress with that capital.

To think that we have attained everything is rather the opposite feeling. One who

is approaching towards the infinite will see, more and more, that he is nowhere. The symptoms will be the opposite.

Still, of course, sometimes it is necessary to assert ourselves with courage, on the strength of our faith: "What I say is true."

Newton was told by his contemporaries, "You have reached the highest zenith of knowledge." He made such a marvelous discovery that the people in his time thought that he is sarvajna, a knower of everything. They thought that he had finished the whole world of knowledge. But Newton said, "I know better than you, because I conceive that I am just collecting pebbles at the shore of the ocean of knowledge. I see that I am more learned than all of you because you say that I have finished all knowledge, but I know that the vast ocean of knowledge cannot be finished. I have only touched its shore. This much I know." So, that is also an assertion, that I know more than you, because I know that knowledge cannot be finished, and you say that knowledge is finished.

This is the nature of the infinite. One who is going to deal with the infinite must always be conscious of his weakness. Then only will he be able to draw light from the infinite. To understand the words of gurudeva is not very easy. Gurudeva is infinite. In his words, he also deals with the infinite. We can't put it under limitation, thinking that we have finished what he wanted to give us. We are students, and we shall remain students forever.

The Disciplic Succession

Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya

Bhagavan Sri Krsna

Brahma

Narada

Vyasadeva

Madhvacarya

Padmanabha

Nrhari

Madhava

Aksobhya

Jayatirtha

Jnanasindhu

Dayanidhi

Vidyanidhi

Rajendra

Jayadharma

Purusottama

Brahmanyatirtha

Vyasatirtha

Laksmipati

Madhavendra Puri

Isvara Puri (Nityananda, Advaita)

Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu

Rupa Goswami (Svarupa Damodara, Sanatana Goswami) Raghunatha dasa Goswami, Jiva Goswami

Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami

Narottama dasa Thakura

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura

(Baladeva Vidyabhusana) Jagannatha dasa Babaji Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Gaurakisora dasa Babaji

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

B.R. Sridhara Deva Goswami, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,........

B.S.Govinda Maharaja

Chapter 10 Instructing Spiritual Masters

Devotee: Can you explain how the principle of disciplic succession works? I was under the impression that in your teaching there must be an unbroken chain of disciplic succession beginning with God Himself, in order for the knowledge to be properly understood. But when I read Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's Bhagavad-gita As It Is, I found that the disciplic succession contained only thirty-eight names, although it says that the system is fifty centuries old. Is this a complete list, or are some names left out? How are we to understand these apparent historical discrepancies?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Our guru parampara, disciplic succession, follows the ideal, not the body; it is a succession of instructing spiritual masters, not formal initiating spiritual masters. In a song about our guru parampara written by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, it is mentioned, mahaprabhu sri caitanya radha krsna nahe anya rupanuga janera jivana: the highest truth of Krsna consciousness comes down through the channel of siksa gurus, instructing spiritual masters. Those who have the standard of realization in the proper line have been accepted in the list of our disciplic succession. It is not a diksa guru parampara, a succession of formal initiating gurus.

Diksa, or initiation is more or less a formal thing; the substantial thing is siksa, or spiritual instruction. And if our siksa and diksa gurus or instructing and initiating spiritual masters are congruent, then we are most fortunate. There are different gradations of spiritual masters. In the scriptures, the symptoms of the guru and the symptoms of the disciple have been described: the guru must be qualified in so many ways, and the disciple must also be qualified. Then when

they come in connection, the desired result will be produced.

We are concerned with Krsna consciousness, wherever it is available.

In the Bhagavad-gita and especially in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, Krsna says, "I start the Krsna consciousness movement, but gradually by the enervating influence of the material world, it weakens. When I find that it has diminished considerably, I return and begin a fresh movement. Again, when I find that it is becoming degraded by the adverse influence of the environment, I send one of my representatives to clear the path and give some fresh energy, invest some fresh capital in my Krsna consciousness movement." What is Krsna consciousness? We must examine the standard of knowledge.

The guru should try to impart to his disciple the capacity of reading what Krsna consciousness really is. Krsna consciousness is not a trade; it is not anyone's monopoly. The sincere souls must thank their lucky stars that they can appreciate what Krsna consciousness is, wherever it may be.

Devotee: How are we to understand that in the history of our disciplic succession, it appears that there are gaps where there was no initiating guru present to formally accept disciples?

Spiritual Light Years

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: We are not concerned with a material connection. The mediator is not this flesh and body as we generally think. In studying the development of scientific thought, we may connect Newton to Einstein, leaving aside many unimportant scientists. We may trace the development of science from Galileo to Newton and then to Einstein, neglecting the middle points. If their contributions are taken into account, then the whole thing is taken into account, and lesser scientists may be omitted. When a long distance is to be surveyed, the nearest posts may be neglected. Between one planet and another, the unit of measurement is the light year; distance is calculated in light years and not from mile to mile, or meter to meter. In the disciplic succession, only the great stalwarts in our line are considered important.

Devotee: There was one question still in my mind on guru parampara which was not clarified. Between Baladeva Vidyabhusana and Jagannatha Dasa Babaji is a gap of almost a hundred years. How is it that between the two of them no one is listed in our guru parampara?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: We have to forget material consideration when we consider the spiritual line. Here in this plane, the spiritual current is always being disturbed and interrupted by material obstructions. Whenever truth is interrupted by a material flow and becomes mixed or tampered with, Krsna appears to again reinstate the truth in its former position of purity (yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata). That attempt is always being made by the Lord and his devotees.

The flow of spiritual truth is a living thing, not a dead thing. The vigilant eye of the Lord is always over our heads, and whenever it is necessary to keep the current pure and flowing in full force, help descends from above. Krsna says to Arjuna, "What I say to you today, I spoke to Vivasvan many, many years ago. Now, by the influence of material conception, that very truth has become contaminated, and so again I say the same thing to you today."

Religious Mutations

Here in the material world, the material consideration is always tampering with the spiritual current; the purity of the truth is always being disturbed. So, sometimes Krsna has to come himself, and sometimes he sends his personal representative to again reestablish the truth in its former and pure state.

When the truth is sufficiently covered, disturbed, and mutilated by the influence of maya, the illusory energy, then an attempt is made by the devotees of the Lord, or by the Lord himself, to rejuvenate it and return it to the previous standard of purity. We cannot expect truth to continue here in this world of misunderstanding without any tampering or interruption. It is not possible.

The intelligent will understand how to apply these principles practically. Suppose we are writing a history: we will note the main figures in the history, set aside those who are not so qualified, and begin the dynasty in order of their importance. Those who are negligible will not be mentioned. In a similar way, those who are really thirsty for spiritual truth like to see the line of pure spiritual heritage. They search out where it is to be found, connect the dynasty of stalwart teachers together, and say "This is our line."

The disciplic succession is not a bodily succession. Sometimes it is present, and sometimes it is lost and only appears again after two or three generations, just as with Prahlada Maharaja. He was a great devotee, but his son was a demon; then

again his grandson was a devotee. Even in the physical line we see such interruptions. In the spiritual line we also see the channel of truth affected by the influence of maya, or misconception. So, the experts will seek out the important personages in the line.

Copernicus, Galileo, Newton and Einstein

Suppose a scientist researches some truth. After a few generations, another scientist comes and takes up that thread and continues his research. Then after a few more generations, another comes and takes up that thread and goes on. If we are to understand the real channel through which the particular research is progressing, we will have to study the important thinkers who helped bring it out.

We see that Copernicus has contributed something before Galileo began, then Newton came. Then there may be a gap for some time, and from Newton, we find that Einstein took it up. In this way, there may be a gap, but still that thread is continued. An intelligent man will see that it began with a particular person, and then it came to another, and then came here. That will be the proper line of research. So, in the spiritual line this also holds true.

Those who cannot understand this simple point are guided by physical considerations. They do not understand what is real spiritual truth. For them, the physical continuation is the guru parampara. But those who have their spiritual eyes awakened say, "No. What was there in the first acarya is not found in the second or the third. But again we find the same standard of purity in the fourth acarya." The Gaudiya Sampradaya of Mahaprabhu is one, and whoever contributes to that real line will be accepted.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana's contribution to the sampradaya is no less important than that of the other great stalwarts in the line. He may be a member of another line, the Madhva sampradaya in the physical sense, but his contribution, especially in attracting people to Gaudiya Vaisnavism with his commentary on the Vedanta-sutra, cannot be neglected by the students of posterity. So, his contribution has been utilized by our acaryas, considering the degree, the essence and the purity of his thought in our spiritual line. Sastra guru, siksa guru, diksa guru, and nama guru are all taken together; in this way, a real channel has been given to save us, to keep up the flow of the highest truth from that world to this world. This policy has been adopted by the acaryas. Wherever

we have found any contribution that is, by the will of Krsna, the highest contribution to the line, we have accepted. So, we accept *sastra guru, siksa guru, diksa guru, mantra guru, nama guru* - we accept them all as our guru.

We give respect to Ramanuja, who is the head of another school of Vaisnavas, but we do not give respect to a sahajiya, an imitationist who is in the line of Mahaprabhu only in the physical sense, but who is mutilating and tampering with the real teachings of Mahaprabhu.

The imitationists are not considered. Although in a physical sense, they are in the line of Mahaprabhu and Rupa and Sanatana, when we go to judge the very spirit of the line we see that they are nowhere.

Their connection with Mahaprabhu is only a physical imitation.

On the other hand, we find that Ramanuja has made a substantial contribution to Vaisnavism, Madhvacarya has given a sufficient contribution to Vaisnavism, and Nimbarka has also made his contribution, so we accept them, according to our necessity. But we reject the physical so-called current-keepers because what is found there is all mutilated and tampered.

There is a proverb. "Which is more useful: the nose or the breath?"

The intelligent will say that the breath is more essential than the nose.

To sustain the life, the nose may be cut off, but if the breath continues, one may live. We consider the breath to have more importance than the nose. The physical form will misguide people to go away from the truth and follow a different direction.

We don't consider the body connection important in the acaryaship. It is a spiritual current, and not a body current. The disciple of a true devotee may even be a nondevotee. We admit that, because we see it, and the Lord Himself says in Bhagavad-gita, sa kaleneha mahata, yogo nastah parantapa: "The current is damaged by the influence of this material world." In the line, some are affected, go astray, and may even become nondevotees. So, the continuation through the physical succession is not a safe criterion to be accepted. We must trace only the current of spiritual knowledge.

Wherever we can get that, we must accept it, even if it comes from the

Ramanuja, Madhva, or Nimbarka sampradaya. As much as we get from them substantially, we accept, and we reject the so-called followers of our own tradition if they are mere imitationists. The son of a political leader may not be a political leader. A political leader may also have a political succession, and his own son, although brought up in a favorable environment, may be rejected. A doctor's son may not be a doctor. In the disciplic order also, we admit the possibility that they may not all come up to the same standard. Those who do not, should be rejected.

And if the truth is found in a substantial way somewhere else, that should be accepted. Wherever there is devotion and the correct consideration about Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, our guru is there. Who is our guru? He is not to be found in the physical form; our guru is to be traced wherever we find the embodiment of the pure thought and understanding which Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu imparted to save us.

Baladeva Vidyabhusana was very akin to the Madhva sampradaya.

But when he came in connection with Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, he showed great interest in Gaudiya Vaisnavism. He has also commented on the Srimad-Bhagavatam and Jiva Goswami's Sat Sandarbha. And that enlightened thought is a valuable contribution to our sampradaya. We cannot dismiss him. He is our guru.

At the same time, if my own relatives do not give recognition to my guru or to the service of Mahaprabhu, I must eliminate them. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Prabhupada has explained the siksa guru parampara in this way. Wherever we find the extraordinary line of the flow of love of God, and support for the same, we must bow down. That line may appear in a zigzag way, but still, that is the line of my gurudeva.

In this way it is accepted. We want the substance, not the form.

The Zigzag Line of Truth

We have left all social concerns and so many other shackles. For what? For the Absolute Truth. And wherever I shall find that, I must bow down my head. And if a great soul shows us, "This is the path to where you will find your thirst quenched. The line is in this zigzag way," we must accept that for our own interest. We are worshipers not of form, but of substance. If the current of

spiritual substance comes another way, but I think that I must try to go this way to reach my goal, it is only jealousy, blind tenacity to stick to the physical thing.

We must free ourselves from this material contamination and try to understand the value of spiritual truth. We should always be prepared for that. We must follow what is necessary, for our own interest.

I am not a servant of A,B,C, or D. I am a servant of Mahaprabhu. I may have to turn this way or that way, or whatever way will be favorable to reach my Lord. Wherever I feel the presence of my Lord in an intense form, I must be attracted to that side. We are out for that thing, and not for any fashion or formality; that will hamper our cause.

Krsna says, sarva-dharman parityajya, mam ekam saranam vraja.

Wherever we shall find him, we must run in that direction. The direction may not be always straight. It may go in a zigzag way,. but if Krsna comes from that side, I must run there. Again if he appears on this side, I must run to this side. My interest is with him. Not that we can challenge, "Why did Krsna appear here, and why is he appearing there? That may be a doubtful thing, so I must stay on this side." No.

If I have genuine appreciation for the real thing, the proper thing, I must go to that side, the side of Krsna.

If I am blind, that is another case. Then, I must have to suffer for my inability. But, if anyone has the ability to understand things properly, he will run wherever he finds help. If a man in a boat is passing through the current and finds himself in danger, then from whatever side help may come, he must run to that side.

If we are worshipers of Siva, when we understand the special superiority of Narayana, should we stick to Siva? And if we are worshipers of Narayana and are shown the superiority of Krsna, should we stick to our Narayana worship? And then should we not try to go from Krsna's Bhagavad-gita to Srimad-Bhagavatam? One may think, "I have read the Bhagavad-gita, I like the Krsna who is the speaker of the Gita." Then when the Srimad Bhagavatam is given to us, should we stick to that Gita Krsna, or should we try to go to the Krsna given in Srimad-Bhagavatam? If we have our interest in Krsna, we must run to his side, wherever he appears.

In the Brhad-bhagavatamrta the story is told of how Gopa-kumara, by chanting his Gopala mantra, gradually leaves one stage and progresses to the next. There, the gradation of devotion is traced from the karma-kanda brahmana, to a devotee king, then to Indra, then to Brahma, then to Siva, from him to Prahlada, then to Hanuman, then the Pandavas, then to the Yadavas, to Uddhava, and finally to the gopis.

In this zigzag way he is passing. In the sincerity of his quest, his thirst is not being quenched. He is going from this side, to that side, and going up. So, all of them have their guru parampara. There is Prahlada's guru parampara, Hanuman's guru parampara, the Pandava's guru parampara, Mahadeva's guru parampara. They have their own guru parampara. Brahma and Mahadeva are gurus themselves; they are the creators of their own lines of guru parampara, but Gopa-kumara passes them also. Why? His thirst is not quenched until he goes to Vrndavana. So, the Brhad-bhagavatamrta has shown us the line of guru parampara, or the real line of our quest, of our search.

If we are sincerely searching after real truth, then wherever we go may be a contribution to our experience for further preaching in the future.

If we go somewhere, hoping with all sincerity that our thirst may be quenched there, but find that it is not quenched, and feel some uneasiness, then, by the grace of the Lord, a connection with higher truth will comes, and we will go somewhere else, thinking that there our thirst will be quenched. Gradually we will again find dissatisfaction, the need for something higher, and again we will progress further. In this way, we may cross many guru paramparas before ultimately attaining the Vraja lila of Krsna, as given by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

We are not interested in fashion or form; if we want the real truth, then wherever it will be found, we must accept it. Mahaprabhu says, "*Kiba vipra, kiba nyasi sudra kene naya, yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya:* Anyone, regardless of caste or social position, may become guru if he knows the science of Krsna." Sometimes the father may not be our guardian. Our uncle may be our guide, and not the father. It is possible. The line of interest is to be considered the most important. So, our line is the siksa guru parampara.

I am thankful to those that are helping my spiritual understanding not only in a formal way, but in the real sense. Whoever is untying the knots of our

entanglement in this material world, giving us light, and quenching our thirst for inner understanding and satisfaction is our guru. In this way, we live on the contribution of all these spiritual masters. They are all our siksa gurus. All the Vaisnavas are more or less our instructing spiritual masters. Our spiritual life may live on their contribution. But we do not accept the imitationists. They are our enemies, asat-sanga, bad association. They will take us away from the real path of understanding and progress.

We must ask our sincere hearts, "From whom do I really get the benefit of spiritual life?" Our sincere conscience will be the best judge, not form. If in an earthen pot there is Ganges water, and in a golden pot there is ordinary water, which should we select? In a case like that, brahmanas, the intelligent class of men, take the holy Ganges water in the earthen pot. So, the substance contained, and not the container, should be given the real importance.

Am I This Body?

I am not this physical body. My own physical identification should be challenged if I am too much addicted to the physical guru parampara.

"Who am I? Am I this physical body?" If I am spiritual, then in the spiritual sphere I shall have to look with spiritual eyes, and pursue whoever will come before me who is really following the path of Mahaprabhu.

When the Pandavas retired to the Himalayas, Yudhisthira Maharaja was going ahead. Nobody believed they would fall. Arjuna couldn't believe that his brothers had fallen. But even after Arjuna had fallen, a dog was going on, following Maharaja Yudhisthira. We may see many men fall down in the path of our journey towards the spiritual goal, but still we should try to reach the goal. And with the help of whoever comes along, I shall go.

Some may be eliminated; even a madhyama-adhikari guru may sometimes be eliminated when he falls down. It is not a happy thing, but it may even occur that my guru was going ahead, taking me forward and fell down. Then with fresh energy, invoking the help of the Lord, I shall have to go on. Even such a disaster may come in our journey. But still, we must not be cowed down. Sometimes alone, and sometimes with company we must go on.

First there must be sukrti, accumulated merit, and then sraddha, faith will guide us. The quality of faith must be examined. Sraddha, faith, is a general term, but

sraddha may be defined into different classes. The high form of faith will be our fare on the way back to Godhead.

Sometimes we may find co-workers, and sometimes we may have to go alone. What of that? We cannot but go to the goal because we shall have the grace of so many unseen gurus.

Unseen Gurus

There are others also who are working, and their ideal will inspire me, although physically I am not seeing any companion or any follower with me. The inspiration of the unseen gurus will be our fare. They will inspire us to go on with the journey. And our own sincere hankering for the truth will be our real guide. That is guru parampara.

Who is guru? Is guru a body? Or is the guru a vairagi, a renunciant?

Or is the guru only a formal guise, a hypocrite who is showing the appearance of a sadhu, but within is doing something else? Who is a guru? Only one who will exclusively guide me to Krsna and Mahaprabhu, with devotion. He is my guru, whatever he may be.

Mahaprabhu told Ramananda Raya, "Ramananda, why do you shrink away? Do you think that I am a sannyasi and you are a grhastha? You are always hesitating to reply to my questions. Do you think it does not look well for you to advise a sannyasi brahmana? Don't hesitate.

You know Krsna best. Give Krsna to me. Have courage." In this way, Mahaprabhu was encouraging Ramananda. "By the grace of Krsna, you have that capital. Give it to me. You are a real capitalist. I have come to preach to the world that you are the wealthiest capitalist of the spiritual world. And that must be used for the good of the public. Don't hesitate. Don't shrink away. Come out."

Ramananda said, "Yes, it is your capital. You have deposited it with me, and today you have come to withdraw it from me. It is your property. I understand. And you press and push me to take it out. All right. I am a mere instrument, used by you. Whatever you want me to say, I am ready to say." In this way, Ramananda was going on. But is Ramananda a member of a sampradaya? We are so much indebted to Ramananda Raya, but he is not in the guru parampara. Still, he is more than many of the gurus who are in the guru parampara.

Srimati Radharani is not in the guru parampara. Should we dismiss her? First there should be guru, and then there is the question of parampara. The question of first importance is who is guru? And then there can be a chain of them coming down.

Alexander the Great - Formbreaker

Sometimes the formal must be left aside. Once, Alexander the Great was with his father, and they came upon a chariot with a thick knot tied in its rope. There was an inscription above the knot, and there it was written, "Whoever can untie this knot will be a great king in the future." The young Alexander asked his father, "What is it Papa?" His father replied, "This knot has been firmly tied here, and there it is written that whoever can unloose it will be a great king in the future."

Alexander said, "I shall do it." He took out his sword and cut the rope.

Is it clear? The formality was not kept. A man stood by the side. He came out and said, "Yes, he will be a great king. It cannot be otherwise." The formality was left aside, the realistic view taken, and immediately Alexander cut the Gordion knot. It is a famous story.

Sticking to formality, he would have been lost. This happened also in the case of Columbus. Someone challenged, can you make an egg stand on a nail? Columbus pushed it in, a portion broke and he stood it on the nail and said, "Yes, I have done so." This is practical knowledge.

So, the real disciplic line provides practical knowledge in support of the divine love which is coming down. We must bow down our heads wherever we find support of that. We should not become formalists, but substantialists; not fashionists, not imitationists, but realistic thinkers. That should always be our temperament.

Chapter 11 The Land of Gurus

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.9.31) it is stated:

na hy ekasmad guror jnanam su-sthiram syat sugrace-puskalam

"One certainly cannot get complete knowledge from only one guru."

In the highest stage of devotion, we must see not only one guru; we must see that guru is everywhere. In the land of Krsna, all are gurus; our transformation should be towards that. Everything in the spiritual world, the entire environment is our guru and we are servants. To enter into Vaikuntha, or Goloka, means that on all sides we must see guru and pay our respects. There is gradation of course, but all are guru.

There are different classes of guru. All Vaisnavas are considered gurus. If the spiritual master gives even one letter to the disciple, what is contained there is infinite. The knowledge given by the spiritual master is infinite. To know and understand it fully, however, different sources are necessary.

In the highest position one can read devotion to Krsna from everywhere. If we can attain the proper vision, then everything will supply me inspiration towards the performance of our duties.

Whenever Mahaprabhu saw a forest, he saw it as Vrndavana.

Whenever he saw a river, he saw the Yamuna. Whenever he saw a hill, he saw it as Govardhana hill. In that highest stage, wherever we cast our glance, it will remind us about our Lord. They will teach us, they will press us to engage ourselves in service to Krsna. That is the duty of guru. Wherever we cast our glance, whatever we come in contact with will only excite us "Do your duty." That is guru. Our guru is whoever gives us impetus for the service of Krsna, whoever helps us to look towards the center. So, because every atom in Vaikuntha and Goloka will encourage us towards our duty, they are all our gurus. Gurus will be very amply available when we can raise ourselves to a higher level.

Guru - Dispels Darkness

When we are in the lower stages of material conception, everything we see takes us away from the center by the out-carrying current.

Whatever we see says "Oh, come and enjoy me." The invitation of enjoyment is found here in the lower level, and the inspiration of renunciation is also found in a particular stage. The impersonalists who desire salvation say "Whatever we find here is temporary. Reject it all!" But devotion is the positive side. From the

side of devotion, everything will draw me towards the center, towards Krsna. And those who will help us in that way, are our gurus. Guru means "one who dispels the darkness of both enjoyment and renunciation."

Krsna tells us not to particularize in one point (acaryam mam vijaniyan). There are so many siksa gurus in the line, and it is our good fortune to see more gurus, to come to the stage where we see gurus everywhere. Everywhere we shall try to draw the hints of the auspicious presence of Godhead. Krsna says, "One who can see me everywhere, and everything in me is never lost to Me, nor I to him"(yo mam pasyati sarvatra, sarvam ca mayi pasyati). We shall try to see Him in every medium. Then our position is safe. Not to see guru is a dangerous position. But if we can see guru everywhere, advising us to concentrate our energy towards the service of God, then we'll be safe.

Of course, there is also a specific vision of guru, from whom I can get the maximum immediate help. But ultimately, Krsna says, "I am the acarya, "See Me in him."

Jewel Within the Palm

Who is acarya? One who knows how to give due respect to his own acarya. Baladeva Vidyabhusana has explained in one of his commentaries how both Rupa and Sanatana Goswami have shown Govinda to the world. He says that if one has a jewel in his hand, he can show the jewel in various ways by holding it differently. Rupa and Sanatana have each dealt in various ways with the jewel by the name of Govinda, who is always served by the Supreme Goddess of Fortune. They have both shown that high substance, Govinda, to the world just as a jewel within their palms.

So not only in the supreme goal of life, but in everything, our knowledge depends on more than one source. We mainly learn from one place, but this is verified and corroborated by many sources; then it comes to be proper knowledge. In the nyaya sastra, the codes of logic, the six processes of acquiring knowledge are mentioned: visaya, the thesis, samsaya, the antithesis, purva-paksa, cross-examination, mimamsa, synthesis, siddhanta, conclusion, and samgatih verification from different sources. After these six stages, something may come in the name of truth in this world. Any knowledge presupposes consultation with different sources, although mainly we can get it from one source. In the beginning we inquire about the truth, not from one, but from many

sources. Then we concentrate to inquire from a particular higher source.

Our first connection with the truth comes from here and there in small quantities. First there is ajnata sukrti, unknown pious activities, then jnata-sukrti, pious activities performed in knowledge, then sraddha, faith, then sadhu sanga, the company with saints. In this way, we search for Sri Krsna. We inquire here and there. Many saints help us to a certain extent. Ultimately we go to that spiritual master in whom we find the greatest possibility of learning the truth, and we surrender there.

Having accepted a spiritual master, one will find that his guru has so many disciples, and he will take from them also. His spiritual master will recommend some books for him. He will say, "Read Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam." That will also help us to get so many gurus - through the books, where we will find many references and quotations from many gurus.

All Are Guru

All of them have their contribution, and ultimately we must understand that we have to enter into the land of the gurus. Everyone should be respected as guru that gives impetus to me to search for Krsna, to serve Krsna. They will all help to carry me to the center.

And this is the most fortunate position: to see everyone, everywhere as guru, to see that no one is our servant and no one is indifferent to us.

That is our highest fortune: to attain that highest spiritual environment where everyone is our guru. Here, everyone is our servant; even our father and mother. We want to draw something from everyone in this world of exploitation. And by renunciation everything is eliminated; it is a deserted position. If we are to enter into the land of eternal prospect, then we must learn to see that all are our guru and we are servants. That they are all gurus means they are all our well-wishing guardians. In that plane, we shall imbibe help from everywhere. Their benediction and their grace will come from everywhere. They are all well-wishers, all guardians, they all guide us towards the highest attainment of our fortune. There cannot be any objection to that.

But still there is gradation, just as in the very existence of God there is gradation: Vasudeva, Visnu, Narayana, Dwarakesa, Mathuresa, Svayam Bhagavan Krsna - there are so many levels. Gradation is always there, according to our inner

position. So, we must not be afraid.

Of course there is a time, when we are surrounded by an unfavorable environment, that the association of a real saint is very rare. In that stage, we may be warned not to mix with the mayavadis, Buddhists, Sankarites, naga babas, and so many other groups of so-called sadhus, so that we may not run hither and thither only to find a guru to get any advice. To save us from such unfavorable circumstances, to protect us, we are warned, "Don't try to see guru everywhere." In a particular stage, however, when we already have a taste for the real truth, we are taken to that plane where everyone is our guru, helping us advance towards our destination.

This caution is valuable in the beginning, because there are so many cheaters who want to devour us. At that stage, especially, to help us proceed towards the goal, we must exclusively concentrate on our guru, avoiding the Buddhists, mayavadis, atheists, and all those who wear red rags in the name of sadhus. Still, in every sampradaya, or religious tradition, that trick has been used: "Only listen here. Stick to the words of your guru, the advice of your guru. Don't try to mix hither and thither, to run here and there to get advice. So many teachers are the enemies of your guru. They are not preaching the real truth." That warning is necessary in some stage. "Don't try to see guru everywhere, because in this world, so many men in the dress of sadhus are going on with their lower campaign." This warning should come in that stage.

Hurled Down to Vaikuntha

And in the lower stage also, to keep up and to develop our attention and devotion towards our guru, so much help should come from our senior godbrothers. They will help us understand the greatness of our guru in different ways. They are also doing the work of siksa guru.

But when we enter in the kingdom of service, then, of course, everyone will help us. It is also said that we may have an inner attraction towards Vrndavana, and our inner awakenment may be in the service of Krsna of Goloka, but if we mix with so many sadhus in Vaikuntha, then we will be hurled down to Vaikuntha.

In a certain stage, we should beware of bad association, so in Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.91) Rupa Goswami has said, sajati-yasye snigdhe sadhau sangah svato vare: What sort of saintly persons shall we try to mix with earnestly?

Those who are in our line, who have the same high spiritual aspirations as we do, and who hold a superior position.

To associate with such saintly persons will help us the most to progress towards the ultimate goal.

There may be some obstacles, but if at heart we are sincere, the environment cannot deceive us, because God's inner help is there, cooperating with our sincere, inner need (na hi kalyana krt kascit durgatim tata gacchati). What we want from our innermost hearts cannot but come true, because Krsna knows everything. There may be some obstacles, but by Krsna's help, they shall all be eliminated and our innermost aspiration will be crowned with success.

Chapter 12 Servant of the Servant

Devotee: Today is my birthday. According to the almanac, it is the most inauspicious day of the year.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: No. This is the happiest and most fortunate day, because on this day you came to guru and Krsna. Many

birthdays have already passed, but this birthday has brought you in connection with Krsna. So this day should be respected not only by your disciples, friends, and relatives; you should also have respect for this day. Krsna has blessed you.

Time is also described in the Caitanya-caritamrta in a verse recorded by Ramananda Raya: *ye kale va svapane dekhainu vamsi vadane.*

Srimati Radharani says, "When in my trance, I came to have a divine vision of Krsna, two enemies suddenly appeared: ecstasy, and also a feeling which is corresponding to extreme love in complete self-surrender. In that state, I could not see Krsna very clearly. These two enemies disturbed me. Ecstasy was my enemy, for it made me self-forgetful, and my greed for his touch was another enemy. They did not allow me to have a clear vision of Krsna so, my thirst for seeing him was unquenched.

A Divine Vision of Krsna

"If by good fortune I have another chance to have his darsan, divine vision, then what should I do? Avoiding Krsna, I shall instead try to worship time. I shall worship that moment, that minute, that second in which I have the divine vision of Krsna. I shall try to propitiate time, so that time itself may stay for some time. With garlands, sandalwood paste, and jewels, I shall try to worship time and not Krsna. If time stands still, being propitiated with my respectful behavior, then Krsna will remain. In this way, I shall try to fix the time, 'You please stay here for some time. Krsna is showing Himself - time, you be eternal here.' Otherwise, like lightning, Krsna comes and vanishes."

We worship the time, the land, the place, the paraphernalia of Krsna.

Anything in connection with Krsna is cinmaya, transcendental. The paraphernalia of Krsna is worthy of our worship. In fact, we shall have to honor Krsna's paraphernalia even more than Krsna Himself. That is the clue to success. Krsna's abode, his paraphernalia, and his devotees have a relationship with Krsna, krsna-sambandha. They are Krsna's devotees, and he is at their disposal. So, if we can propitiate them, they will take interest in us and take us up into that realm. Otherwise we are helpless. In the Padma Purana, it is said:

aradhananam sarvesam

visnor aradhanam param

tasmat parataram devi

tadiyanam samarcanam

Once, Parvati-devi asked Lord Siva, "Of all kinds of worship, whose worship is best?" Then, Lord Siva told her plainly, "The worship and devotional service of Lord Narayana, Visnu, is the highest." Then Parvati became a little mortified and disappointed, thinking, "But I am serving Siva, so I hold a lower position." Then the next line came, tasmat parataram devi tadiyanam samarcanam "But higher than the worship of Narayana is worship of the devotees of Lord Narayana.

That is even greater than devotion to the Lord Himself." Then, Parvati smiled, thinking, "Then I am serving the devotee of the Lord. Siva is a devotee: vaisnavanam yatha sambhuh. So, I am doing the best thing."

This is also confirmed by Krsna, in the Adi Purana:

ye me bhakta-janah partha

ne me bhaktas ca te janah

mad bhaktanam ca ye bhaktas

te me bhaktatama matah

"Those who worship Me directly are not real devotees; real devotees are those who are devoted to My devotees." And this principle is true in our own experience. It is said, "If you love me, love my dog." How intense one's love for his master must be if he can love the master's dog. And he loves the dog only because it is his master's dog; not that he wants to take away the dog for himself. He loves it not with the idea of independent love for the dog, but because it is the master's dog.

This is a higher test of our love than simply to love the master. This will test whether we are really lovers. Krsna is more pleased if he sees that his servant is being served. Why? Because His servant always serves Him, but he won't take anything in return from Krsna. Krsna tries to give his devotees something, but they won't take it. They have no aspiration to fulfill, no petition to enter in the course of their service. They want only cent per cent service. There is no possibility

for Krsna to award any remuneration there, He can't find the slightest hole in their devotional service through which some remuneration can be pushed. His devotees are wholesale servants, and nothing but.

Krsna tries his best to give something to his devotees in return for their service, but He fails. So, when Krsna sees that His desired aim of rewarding his servants is being done by someone else, He becomes indebted to that person thinking, "What I wanted to do for my servant, he is doing. I wanted to do that, but failed: it was not accepted. But now someone else is doing the same thing I wanted to do." Krsna is more favorable to the devotee who serves his servant. Then Krsna comes to serve him. That is the underlying purpose of His saying "Those who are devotees of my devotee, they are the real devotees of my heart." So, bhakta puja, worship of the devotees, is the best kind of worship. This statement is confirmed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, in the Vedas and by Vrndavana Das Thakura in the Caitanya Bhagavata, amara bhakta-puja, ama haite bala. Bhakta-puja, worship of the devotees, is advocated everywhere. At the same time, we

should try to understand who is a devotee. That is also to be ascertained. What is the sign of a real devotee?

Krsna says, "Those who say they are directly devoted to me are not devotees proper; those who are devotees of my devotees are my real devotees." We should try to follow the principle of this saying. This is not a perverted remark, but there is some genuine reality in it. If we look for its inner meaning, we will reach the conclusion our guru maharaja has announced. He said, "We are suddha sakta, worshipers of the pure potency, not the mundane potency." We worship the potency who is wholesale dedicated to the potent without retaining Her individual independence as a separate entity at all, who is cent per cent dependent on Krsna. Such a potency as this is very, very rarely to be conceived.

The direct approach to Krsna is improper. One must approach him through the proper channel, through the devotees. That is the real approach. Therefore, Gaudiya Math eliminates Mirabhai and so many other apparently great devotees from the category of real devotees, because, although they are mad in praise of Krsna, they have little regard for the real devotees of Krsna.

Spiritual Bureaucracy

Krsna is not alone. A king is always present with his entourage, his great establishment. If one is really to approach the king, it must be done through the proper channel. Krsna is always surrounded by a big hierarchy, a big bureaucracy, and one cannot approach Krsna directly.

He whose approach is real must select a proper channel. He cannot but praise those devotees and revere them for their magnanimity. It is only by their help that we can get the nearness of Krsna. Should we think it possible that one can take a jump across the whole system and approach the king? It is unreal.

Someone may be externally engaged in such a way that apparently he is a great devotee of Krsna, but if he eliminates the devotees, that devotion has not taken real shape; it is a vague thing. He is far away from Krsna. Suppose we take as an example the highest peak in the Himalayas, Mount Everest. We can see Mount Everest from far off.

But to approach Mount Everest, we must pass through so many closer mountain peaks. When our approach to Mount Everest is genuine, we cannot avoid discovering the name and characteristic of other peaks surrounding Mount

Everest. But from far off we can see only Mount Everest and not the other peaks surrounding it. So, when we say that our connection is with Krsna alone, then we are far off. If we are to actually approach the king, we must approach him through his entourage. If we are actually to approach Everest, we cannot but have a connection with the nearer peaks surrounding that highest peak. So, if we are practically engaged in approaching Krsna, our approach will be realistic only when we are engaged with the many devotees in different departments of service to Krsna.

The Real Test of Devotion

I noted when we were preaching in South India, that whenever any gentleman who was a renowned devotee in a particular place approached our guru maharaja, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada, he used to ask such men, "Under whose guidance does your devotional service to Krsna go on?" Generally they used to say, "No, no, I am directly concerned with Lord Krsna, and Lord Rama." Then, when they went away, we heard our guru maharaja say, "He has no devotion." That person was dismissed as an imitation devotee. That is a vague kind of devotion. It has not taken any particular shape, because he is ignoring the asraya, the shelter-giving devotees in the positions surrounding the Lord. That is the great test of devotion.

Otherwise, without taking shelter of a devotee, if one shows great devotion, what is his motive? Generally they think, "We want liberation, not the service of Krsna. To earn liberation, we are accepting the devotion of Krsna." That is a lower form of worship - worldly worship - not real worship in the transcendental plane. That is not eternal, but temporary. Devotion to the Lord must not be subservient to any other aim of life. The desire for liberation is one criterion of an imitation devotee, and another criterion is the neglect of elevated devotees. When the Lord alone is being worshiped, that is also false. These two kinds of apparent devotional practices which are generally seen in the world may be dismissed. But the world does not get any news of all these things.

Devotee: So, the spiritual master is sometimes called the asraya vigraha, the personality of whom one must take shelter?

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: Yes. Just as in the beginning, one sees the forest from a distance, but in the end he enters the inner circle of the forest, so from far off Krsna alone appears to be the asraya, the giver of shelter, but when we

approach Krsna more closely, we will find our shelter among his devotees. Our real shelter is found within his inner circle of servitors, not with Krsna directly.

We are of a vitiated nature, but there are those who under no circumstances deviate from Krsna. They are the eternal paraphernalia of the Lord. They are not like us; they are eternally connected with Krsna, but we are sometimes coming and going away; we are unreliable servitors. That is our position, so we cannot claim the same position as the absolute servitors of the Lord. Under their guidance we can be given the chance of service, so we must accept that position.

We are recruits, we are not amongst the permanent servitors of Krsna.

We must perform our service under a bona fide superior. The new followers must be gradually accommodated under some bona fide, permanent servitors in the land of Krsna.

Chapter 13 Lives of the Saints

In his Caitanya Siksamrta, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained that there are two types of devotees in the stage of premaruruksu, the beginning stages of pure divine love. These two kinds of devotees are classified as viviktanandi and gosthyanandi. The gostyanandi, by nature, love preaching. They live among the Vaisnavas. But there is another group, the viviktanandi, who prefer a solitary position. There they chant the holy name of the Lord, or think about the Lord's pastimes (lila). These two groups have both been mentioned as being situated on a high platform of devotional service, just before the stage of pure love of Godhead. When they have completely attained the highest stage, there is no qualitative difference between one and the other: they are one and the same. Whatever work Krsna wants to do through them, they will perform in surrender to him. Therefore, it cannot be said that one who does not have the preaching tendency is a lower Vaisnava.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura has clearly grouped these two sections of devotees in the stage of those who are just about to occupy the highest plane. There are two groups: one of a preaching type, another of a solitary type, but according to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, we cannot make the distinction that one is higher and the other is lower.

According to the desire of Krsna, they will do his will. The devotee whom Krsna wants to preach will do that work, but those who do not like to work in that way cannot be called unqualified. Those that like preaching will naturally speak in favor of the preaching camp.

Because they are inspired by Krsna to do that service, they are successful. Krsna says, Acaryam mam vijaniyan: "It is my inspiration that can really deliver the fallen souls. Whomever Krsna will accept can understand him - others cannot. (yam evaisa vrnute tena labhyas).

When Krsna delegates power sufficiently to a Vaisnava, and wants to deliver many fallen souls through him, it takes place by His will.

Svarupa Damodara is not found to preach in any extensive way.

Ramananda Raya is also not found to preach in an extensive way to make disciples, going from door to door. On the other hand, Nityananda Prabhu and others did. Krsna selects his instruments according to his own desire.

Kaviraja Goswami prays vande ham sri guroh sri yuta pada kamalam sri gurun vaisnavams ca. First he offers his respects to the group of spiritual masters who are immediately in touch with the fallen souls.

Then he says, sri rupam sagrajatam: he offers his respects to the sastra gurus. Sri Rupa and Sanatana did not practically come in touch with the masses for preaching, but they gave scriptures for the preachers.

The sastras the rules and regulations, and the ontological questions - all these things were given by Rupa and Sanatana. Are they not uttama-adhikaris? They did not come in direct touch with the people, but as they were meant to by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, they laid the foundation for the preaching of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. They are the sastra gurus, the spiritual masters who give the revealed scriptures.

Spiritual Touchstones

Krsnadasa Kaviraja Goswami first offers his respects to the recruiter gurus, then in a higher stage, to the sastra gurus, and then to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who came with his associates and paraphernalia to inaugurate a new truth in the world. In five stages he offers his respects to his spiritual masters, and in the

highest stages he offers his respects to the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha and Govinda, and all the gopis, headed by Lalita and Visakha. (sri radha krsna padan saha-gana lalita sri visakhanvitams ca). So the sastra gurus, are doing some work as they have been inspired by Sri Krsna. They are not coming in direct touch with the fallen souls. So, we cannot say that because they are not directly preaching to the fallen souls, they are not sparsa-mani, or touchstones. To say so would only be expressing our partiality to the preaching group.

We have to put some faith in the spiritual master. We must have faith that what he does is the activity of the Supreme Lord working within him, and that Krsna has come to preach about Himself through our spiritual master. We must try to see Krsna in guru, and guru's actions as meant to deliver us. We are encouraged in this way.

Still, this is the relative view. From very strict impartial vision, we can classify the guru according to his realization as an intermediate devotee, (madhyama-adhikari), or a topmost devotee (uttama-adhikari). Amongst the servitors of Krsna, some are inclined towards Radharani, some towards Candravali and some are in the middle.

Some devotees are more attracted to Vraja lila, some to Gaura lila, and some are in the middle. This is the nature of the Lord's pastimes.

These differences will exist eternally.

Gaura-Lila: Higher than Krsna-Lila

Some devotees have a preaching nature, whereas others may be of the secluded type, but that does not mean that all who are of the secluded nature are lower and all who are of the preaching nature are higher.

We can't say that. They should be judged according to their surrender and acceptance of Krsna. Both Gaura lila and Krsna lila are the highest in Goloka, but if we are bold enough to assert that Gaura lila is higher than Krsna lila because of its magnanimous dealings, because it is distributing itself, it should be given more importance. In that consideration, it is superior to Krsna lila. And if we are to follow very strictly this point, then of course, we may have to appreciate the preaching section of the Vaisnavas, considering that they are doing the most beneficial work in the universe (loka hitaya ca).

"The preachers are more fortunate because through them Krsna is trying to release many fallen souls." A relative form of vision may be seen in that way: "Gaura lila is higher than Krsna lila. Why? Because it is spacious and broad; it is available to everyone. And in Gaura lila, Krsna is distributing himself to the fallen." This is something in addition to Krsna lila. Then, whenever we find that good fortune has made someone an agent to raise up the fallen souls, we may have some greater appreciation for him. Some justification for considering the preachers to be more fortunate may come if we consider that Krsna is better when preaching then when playing within his own group.

Naturally, we will have preference for the preachers who have brought Krsna consciousness here amongst us. Krsna has chosen certain devotees as his agents to preach about him to the fallen souls. And that is more desirable for us, in our present position. So, if we develop our perspective in that line, of course we can say that fallen souls like us will give more stress to those who are the cause for our delivery. To think that some agents are preferable to others because the symptom of magnanimity is more easily traceable in them is a relative view, in the ultimate context of reality.

Although sometimes we may judge Vaisnavas according to their different activities, we are not always correct, because a devotee is chosen for a particular service by the Lord, and whatever the Lord wants to do through him is done, by His will. This is the underlying principle: it is His selection. Sometimes the selection comes to A, sometimes to B, and sometimes to C. We are all at the disposal of the Lord's infinite will, and according to His sweet will, according to how Krsna wants to utilize us, our activities will be successful. That is the absolute consideration. We cannot fail to connect success with the medium; there is also some value in that, but we must consider that Krsna is there in the background. We must always understand that the divine will, the highest will, is working through us. So, we should not be extreme in judging a devotee according to external considerations.

Babajis and Preachers

Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja did not preach, but his disciple, our spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada, preached with great magnitude. Srila Lokanatha Goswami did not preach at all, but we find that the preaching of his only disciple, Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura, was most extensive. So, a Vaisnava should not be judged only by the amount of work that

he shows outwardly. His success is at the disposal of the divine will.

Krsna awards service to a particular person according to His own choice, and enables that person to carry out that service. There are many examples of this.

Srila Nityananda Prabhu preached throughout the length and breadth of Bengal with great force, but Srila Gadadhara Pandita, although apparently not doing any tangible service in the lila of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, is said to be Radharani's bhava, transcendental sentiments, incarnate. And Gadadhara Pandita's affinity for Mahaprabhu exceeds that of all others.

So, we should not judge the position of a Vaisnava by the magnitude of his external activities alone. Of course, we cannot ignore the service rendered by a devotee. That is a noble thing, that is a great thing, but ultimately the key is in the hand of the Lord (ekala isvara krsna ara saba bhrtya).

Krsna is Dancing

Krsna is at the root of everything, and whatever he wills is successful.

Krsna wants to dance in a particular way with a particular servitor, and he successfully dances according to His own sweet will. Krsna is the wire-puller, the controller. The key is in His hand. He controls both universal and specific dealings. By understanding this, we can save ourselves from pratistha, or false prestige, the thirst after name and fame. If we are fully conscious of the fact that everything is in the Lord's hands, then we cannot feel any pride. So to teach us that it is not very easy to recognize a real Vaisnava by his external dress or manners alone, Gadadhara Pandita apparently misunderstood the position of Pundarika Vidyanidhi, an exalted associate of the Lord.

Gadadhara Pandita was taken by Mukunda Datta to see Pundarika Vidyanidhi. Mukunda Datta came from the same village as Pundarika.

Mukunda knew him, and so he asked Gadadhara Pandita, "Would you like to see a real Vaisnava?" Gadadhara Pandita told him, "Yes, I am always eager to have the darsan of a real Vaisnava. Then Gadadhara Pandita followed Mukunda Datta to the quarters of Pundarika Vidyanidhi, and he was dumbfounded by what he saw. "What is this?"

He thought. "Here is an aristocrat with curled, scented hairs, and a stylish,

princely dress, smoking a pipe decorated with a golden thread and the whole room is filled with a sweet scent. He is a Vaisnava?"

Mukunda Datta could understand Gadadhara's heart, and began to sing a verse from the Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.2.23):

aho baki yam stana-kala-kutam

jighamsayapayayad apy asadhvi

lebhe gatim dhatry-ucitam tato 'nyam

kam va dayalum garanam vrajema

"Oh, how amazing it is! The sister of Bakasura (Putana), desiring to kill Sri Krsna, smeared poison on her breasts and forced Krsna to drink their milk. Even so, Lord Krsna accepted her as His mother, and so she reached the destination suitable for Krsna's mother. Of whom should I take shelter but the most merciful Krsna?"

Rolling In Ecstasy

Upon hearing this, Pundarika Vidyanidhi became very serious. His movements stopped, and then some shivering was apparent in his body. The whole atmosphere was changed. He began to throw his hands and feet left and right. He cast his smoking pipe aside and began to roll on his bed, tearing off his silk clothing and the silk sheets, and pulling out his beautifully curled and decorated hair. He began to cry, "Of whom should I take shelter but the most magnanimous Lord? Where should I take refuge without such a Lord?" With this on his lips, he was rolling on the floor in ecstasy.

After a long time, he gradually subsided, and Gadadhara thought to himself, "What did I think about this great personality? He has so much love for Krsna within. Although externally he appears as an ordinary man, a slave of luxury, internally he is a great devotee. What intense love he has for Krsna!" Then he thought, "I have committed Vaisnava aparadha, an offense to a great devotee. How can I free myself? I thought ill of him. What is the remedy for that offense?" So, he thought to himself, and then told Mukunda, "I have committed an offense against this great mahatma. How can I get out of that? I am thinking that generally those who come to this devotional line have to formally accept

some preceptor, but I have not yet taken initiation from any Vaisnava. If I take initiation from him, he will forgive me and my offenses. He won't take any offense from me if I surrender unto his holy feet. Then only can I get release from this crime. But I have to consult my master Gauranga Mahaprabhu." So, he went to consult with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Sometime before this, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was seen calling the name of Pundarika and crying, "Pundarika, my father! Pundarika!

Where are you?" In this way, he was suddenly crying. Ordinary people could not understand. They began to ask, "Who is that Pundarika? For whom is the Lord wailing so much? Why is Nimai Pandita wailing 'Pundarika! Pundarika!'?"

Within a few days, Pundarika came from another village to his Navadvipa house. Mukunda Datta was his co-villager, so he knew Pundarika. When the devotees inquired, "Who is this Pundarika?"

Mukunda Datta answered, "Pundarika has got a small estate, he is a well-to-do, married man." So, Gadadhara Pandita asked Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu about Pundarika Vidyanidhi, saying, "I have committed an offense against the great Vaisnava, Pundarika Vidyanidhi, so for my own spiritual good, I feel the necessity to take initiation from him.

But without consulting you, and getting your consent, I can't do anything. I put it before you. What should I do?

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu welcomed the idea, saying, "Yes, this is very good. You must accept him as your guru." It is said by authoritative sources that Pundarika Vidyanidhi was the father of Radharani, that he was the incarnation of Vrsabhanu Maharaja. So, Gadadhara Pandita took initiation from Pundarika Vidyanidhi. In this way, we should not be extreme in judging a devotee only from his external activities. "Naturally, we will have preference for the preachers who have brought Krsna consciousness here amongst us.

So, if we develop our perspective in that line, of course we can say that fallen souls like us will give more stress to those who are the cause for our delivery. To think that some agents are preferable to others because the symptom of magnanimity is more easily traceable in them is a relative view in the ultimate context of reality."

"I want that intimate connection with you, my Lord. I am the neediest of the needy, but at the same time I have this ambition: I am so disgusted with the world outside that I want the most intense and comprehensive relationship with you. With this attitude, the surrendering process begins and rises step by step. I want that standard of divine love, of intimacy with you. I want to dive deep within you."

Chapter 14 The Line of Sri Rupa

The impersonalist transcendentalists say that once we are independent of the flesh connection, the consciousness of the human soul is the highest thing and that no finer, higher thing can exist. But the scriptures say that the Supersoul, or paramatma, is superior in existence to the individual soul, and that the Bhagavan conception, the personal conception of God, is even higher. This begins with the Vasudeva conception: Krsna alone. The Narayana conception is again higher, and the Krsna conception is the highest. And even in the Krsna conception there are divisions: Dwaraka, Mathura, and Vrndavana. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Srimad-Bhagavatam assert that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead: *krsnas tu bhagavan svayam.*

The Vrndavana conception of Krsna as the Supreme Entity is the highest because beauty is above all. Beauty is above all grandeur and power. Neither physical, mental, or intellectual power, nor any other power, but beauty and love is the ultimate controlling power. Absolute good is absolute beauty, and that is the absolute controller. Mercy is above justice.

Generally, we cannot conceive that anything could be greater than justice; we think that justice must be the highest principle. But we are told that mercy is above justice. And who can show mercy? Not an ordinary person, but only a king. One who can compensate for the loss in justice can give mercy. And the highest court is able to compensate everything. Such a realm exists. And there, the Lord is engaged in pastimes with his paraphernalia of equal quality. There is such a law, a provision beyond the sense of justice in our puppy brain.

Uddhava is recognized as the principle devotee of the Lord, and his statement about mercy is found in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.2.23):

aho baki yam stana-kala-kutam jighamsayapayayad apy asadhvi

lebhe gatim dhatry-ucitam tato 'nyam

kam va dayalum garanam vrajema

He says, "Where else should I surrender? How can I surrender to anyone more merciful than Krsna, when I find that the demoness Putana in the garb of maternal affection went to kill Krsna, but instead received such a wonderful benediction that she was given a higher post as one of Krsna's mothers? My Lord is so kind, so benevolent.

Where else should I surrender? Her poisoned breast was put into the mouth of the infant child Krsna, and she was blessed with such a high and affectionate post! So, how can we measure his grace, his infinite mercy? His ways and mercy are beyond all expectations." Rather than treating her with justice, we find just the opposite. He showed magnanimous behavior towards his greatest enemy. So, beyond justice there is mercy, and such a high degree of mercy, such a quality and intensity of mercy that it cannot be measured. Uddhava prays, "Where should I find such a standard of grace as this? I must fall flat at the divine feet of Lord Krsna. Why should any man of intelligence not run to fall flat at the feet of such a magnanimous personality as Krsna?

His nature is that of the highest love."

Dept. of Mercy

We, the finite, should approach the infinite with this spirit: "If justice is applied, I have no hope. I omit that department. I have come only to seek my fortune in the department of mercy, where there is no calculation of right or wrong, of merit or demerit. I have come to that department, my Lord, because I do not know what is within me. When I analyze and study my own heart, I find that I am unknown to my own self. I am so helpless and wretched that I don't even know my self. How then should I venture to appeal in a department where something will be granted only after a calculation of my merits and demerits? I don't want that. I don't want any decision based on justice.

"I surrender. You may do whatever you like with me. I am the worst of sinners. What to do with me now is in your hands. You, Savior, I have come to you. If there is any possibility - save me. This is my open appeal, my one-sided appeal."

This sort of self-abnegation will automatically cleanse our hearts. By this attitude of saranagati, or surrender, we invite the greatest attention from above. saranagati, surrender, is the only way to be reinstated in our lost prospect.

At present, we are disconnected from the prospect of divine love which we cherish in the innermost quarter of our hearts. If we want to have that privilege very easily and very quickly, we must approach the Lord with plain speaking, and with a naked body and mind, with everything exposed. Srila Rupa Goswami in Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.154) has written:

mat-tulyo nasti papatma

naparadhi ca kascana

parihare 'pi lajja me

kim bruve purusottama

"My Lord, I feel ashamed. How shall I offer you so many pure things like flowers? Generally, pure things are offered to you, but what about me? I have come with the most filthy thing to offer to you. I feel ashamed. I have come to you, with only my shame, to beg for your mercy. There is no parallel to my sinful, criminal life. Everything that can be conceived of as bad is found in me. It is very difficult even to speak about the characteristics of my heinous sins and crimes. Still, your nature, existence, fame, and benevolence cannot but attract me.

You can save me. You can purify me. Hoping against hope, I have come to you. And I have only one solace, that I am the real object of your mercy. Your tendency is to purify the meanest. Those who are the most needy have some claim to your mercy. I am the worst of the needy and the meanest of the mean. This is my only qualification, my only hope to attract your attention and appeal to your magnanimity."

Rupa Goswami says in his Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (1.2.153) that still there is some sort of subconscious element within him:

yuvatinam yatha yuni

yunanca yuvatau yatha

mano 'bhiramate tadvan

mano 'bhiramatam tvayi

Just as a young boy feels attraction for a young girl, I want that sort of attraction towards you. I want to be engrossed in you, forgetting all material paraphernalia. And by sincere surrender, at once, our progress begins. And the development of that kind of attraction takes us to the topmost rank. I want that intimate connection with you, my Lord. I am the neediest of the needy, but at the same time I have this ambition. I am so disgusted with the world outside that I want the most intense and comprehensive relationship with you. With this attitude, the surrendering process begins and rises step by step. I want that standard of divine love, of intimacy with you. I want to dive deep within you.

Appearing and Disappearing Scriptures

govinda-vallabhe radhe prarthaye tvam aham sada tvadiyam iti janatu govindo mam tvaya sahav This prayer is found in the Arcana Paddhati, which comes from Gopal Bhatta Goswami's edition of the Hari-bhakti-vilasa. From there it has sprung through him. It is there in the sastra, which is an eternal flow of a particular current of knowledge. Everything is eternal in Vaikuntha and Goloka. Just as the sun comes up and goes down, appears and disappears, the thought is eternal and sometimes appears and disappears.

In this verse, govinda-vallabhe radhe, there is a sudden turn. Krsna says to his devotee, "Oh, do you want an intimate relationship with me? It is not to be found within my department. You will have to go to another department. Go then to the department of Radhika." Then, at once, the devotee's thought is transferred towards that side. All his energy is monopolized there. It is Her monopoly. "Your inner quest is not to be found within my department," Krsna says. "You'll have to go elsewhere and file a petition there."

And with this inspiration, at once the devotee puts his petition to Radharani: govinda-vallabhe radhe: "O, Sri Radhe, your master and sustainer is Govinda. He is the Lord of your heart." Govinda means,

"He who can give fulfillment to all our senses." With our senses we can feel perception as well as knowledge. Govinda is the master who gives fulfillment to all our channels of perception. "Govinda is your Lord. But just the opposite is also true. You are mistress of the heart of Govinda, the Supreme Master. Is it

not? You are queen of the heart of Govinda. I have been directed to come to you with my petition.

Please enlist my name in your department and admit me as a servitor in your group."

Flowing River of Nectar

radhe vrndavanadhise karunamrta-vahini

krpaya nija-padabja dasyam mahyam pradiyatam

"O Radhe, O Queen of Vrndavana, You are like a flowing river filled with the nectar of mercy. Please be kind upon me, and bestow upon me some small service at Your lotus feet." You are the Queen of the whole management of ecstasy (rasotsava). Rasa means ecstasy. That is an unlimited flow of ecstasy. That is the specialty of Vrndavana: adi-rasa, the original rasa, madhurya-rasa, conjugal mellow. All rasas are branches of that rasa, in its peculiar developing character. If analyzed, all rasas will be found within madhurya-rasa. And madhurya-rasa has been recognized as the highest mellow of devotion.

In his conversation with Ramananda Raya, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu rejected devotion contaminated with reason. He said, eho bahya age kaha ara, "This is superficial; go further." Mahaprabhu accepted that real bhakti begins from the stage of pure devotion, unmixed with reason. When Ramananda suggested dasya-rasa Mahaprabhu said, "This is good, but go further." Then Ramananda mentioned sakhya-rasa: Mahaprabhu said, "This is also good, but go further." Then he came to vatsalya-rasa, the son-hood of Godhead. "This is very good," Mahaprabhu said, "But go further." Then he came to madhurya-rasa, "Yes," Mahaprabhu said, this is best." At that stage in the development of rasa, Vrndavana is the most suitable place.

Madhurya-rasa is found most extensively in Vrndavana. So, it is said, radhe vrndavanadhise: "You are the Queen of that sort of lila which is found in Vrndavana. There, the highest type of nectar is flowing. You are like a flowing river of nectar."

Distributing Ecstasy

The very nature of Krsna has been described as "Ecstasy Himself." He is tasting

the innate ecstasy of himself. He knows his ecstasy and he feels it, but to distribute that innate ecstasy outside, a particular potency is indispensable, and that is known as hladini. The gist of hladini sakti, or Krsna's internal ecstasy potency, is Radhika, who is drawing the innermost rasa, the ecstasy of the highest order, extracting it from within and distributing it outside.

So, it is said, karunamrta-vahini: Ecstasy mixed with magnanimity is flowing from that great fountain, and just as a river flowing from the mountains may carry with its current many valuable minerals to the outside world, the hladini potency carries rasa out from the abode of the rasa-svarupa, Krsna Himself, ecstasy personified. The flow of that river of nectar carries ecstasy and rasa, the flow of sweetness and magnanimity, to distribute to others.

Then, another categorical change is effected within the mind of a devotee, in the meantime, in the course of his progress. He realizes, "Oh! Krsna is of secondary concern to me. I find my primary connection with you, Sri Radhe. I want your direct service and not the direct service of Krsna." This awakening of the heart, intimate adherence and obligation to the next nearest agent, develops in a surrendered soul. At this stage, the devotee thinks, "I shall derive more benefit by giving my closest attention to the nearest agent, my gurudeva. I shall thrive thereby." And it is his concern to sanction the upper connections. Of course, our intentions should be pure and genuine, and the business of that agent is to give us a favorable, normal connection with the hierarchy of service.

All our attention should be concentrated in the service of our guru.

This should be the idea. Our first tendency is to approach Krsna. In that stage, the first thing to understand is that we are helpless. Of course, all things must be sincere. First there is the stage of helplessness, then we want the shelter of Krsna, sweetness personified, then we are attracted to sweetness of a particular type, and to approach that department. There, we pray for the final closest connection or permanent membership as a servitor there. This has been taught by Srila Raghunatha Dasa Goswami as the highest achievement of the living being. Dasa Goswami lived for sixteen years continuously in the association of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Svarupa Damodara. After they disappeared from this world, Raghunatha Dasa, disgusted with his future prospect, went to Vrndavana to finish his life. But when he met Rupa and Sanatana there, he saw another vision, a dream of a new life. Then he found, "Although Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Svarupa Damodara have disappeared from my physical eyes,

they are living here in Rupa and Sanatana, within their activities, in their preaching tendency.

Mahaprabhu is here, as living as anything." He had to reject the idea of finishing his life. And with new vigor he began to serve in Vrndavana.

And Dasa Goswami has given us the understanding of our highest aspiration. He says, "O, Radhika, I want your service. If you are not satisfied with me, I do not want Krsna, nor his land, Vraja." This is his prayer and he is admitted as the prayojana-acarya, the guru who has shown us what is the highest aim of our life, prayojana-tattva, the ultimate destination. And this sloka proves his position as the giver of our destination.

An Ocean of Nectar

asabharair-amrta-sindhu-mayaih kathancit

kalo mayatigamitah kila sampratam hi

tvam cet krpam mayi vidhasyasi naiva kim me pranair vrajema ca varoru bakarinapi?

Vilapa Kusum Anjali (102)

This sloka is a direct prayer to Radharani. It expresses a particular type of hope which is so sweet and reassuring that it is compared with an unlimited ocean of nectar. He says, "With that hope I am somehow passing my days, flagging my days, dragging my life through these tedious times only for that hope. That hope is sustaining me, the nectarine ocean of hope is attracting me and sustaining me. Somehow I am dragging my days to my only safety.

"Otherwise, I have lost the direct association of Mahaprabhu, Svarupa Damodara and so many other great souls, and still I am living. Why? I have a particular ray of hope. And the prospect and quality of my hope is very great and high. But my patience has reached its end. I can't endure it any longer. I can't wait. I am finished, I can't wait any more.

At this moment if you do not show your grace to me, I am finished. I shall lose the chance forever. I shall have no desire to continue my life. It will all be useless.

"Without Your grace, I can't stand to live another moment. And Vrndavana, which is even dearer to me than my life itself - I am disgusted with it. It is painful; it is always pinching me. What to speak of anything else, I am even disgusted with Krsna. It is shameful to utter such words, but I can have no love even for Krsna, until and unless you take me up within your confidential camp of service. Such a charm I have come for. I have seen the clue of such a charm within the service of your camp. Without that, everything is tasteless to me.

And I can't maintain my existence even in Vrndavana. And even Krsna, what to speak of others, has no charm for me." This is the prayer of Raghunatha Dasa Goswami.

Service of Radharani

So, Radha-dasyam, the servitorship of Srimati Radharani, is said to be the highest attainment of the living being by the school established by Mahaprabhu. It is the gist of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. It is Krsna's own version. He says in Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.14.15):

na tatha me priyatama atmayonir na sankarah

na ca sankarsano na srir naivatma ca yatha bhavan

"O, Uddhava! Neither Brahma, nor give, nor Baladeva, nor Laksmi, nor even my own self are as dear to me as you are." And that Uddhava glorifies Vrndavana, the vraja-gopis, and Radharani in this way (10.47.61):

asa maho carana-renu jusam aham syam

vrndavane kim api gulma-latausadhinam

ya dustyajam svajanam arya-patham ca hitva bhejur mukunda-padavim srutibhir vimrgyam

"The gopis of Vrndavana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to renounce, and they have sacrificed even their religious principles to take shelter of the lotus feet of Krsna, which are sought after even by the Vedas. O! Grant me the fortune to be born as a blade of grass in Vrndavana, so that I may take the dust of those great souls upon my head."

The Search for Sri Radha

Uddhava has shown us the high position of the gopis. And between all the gopis and Radharani, there is also a categorical difference. That was proved in rasa-lila. When Krsna and the gopis openly displayed their transaction of heart, with that divine rasa flowing, and inundating all directions, Radharani was also there. She gave the highest contribution to the common rasa-vilasa display of the parakiya-madhurya-rasa, paramour mellow. Then, suddenly, dissatisfaction came in Radharani's heart. She began to think, "Am I also counted in the common flow of rasa?" Some reaction came within her mind, and suddenly she left. After displaying her peculiar type of superexcellent dancing and singing, introducing a flow of new type there, suddenly she departed. She left the circle of the rasa dance. And Krsna suddenly found "Radharani is not here. It is tasteless." The flow of rasa was there, but the gist, the quality, is a little down. He felt, "Why is it not so satisfactory to my inner heart?" He felt some ebb in the tide. And then by inspection he found that Radharani was absent. Disappointed, he left the circle of the rasa dance, and went to search after her.

Although the parakiya-madhurya-rasa, the highest mellow of conjugal love, Vrndavana, and the gopis were all there, still there is a categorical difference in quality between the other gopis and the particular camp of Radharani. In every way there is a categorical difference, both in quality and quantity. Jayadeva Goswami, in his Gita-govinda (3.1) has described how Krsna left the circle of the rasa dance:

kamsarir api samsara

vasana-baddhasrnkhalam

radham adhaya hrdaye

tatyaja vraja sundarih

"Lord Krsna took Srimati Radharani within his heart, for he wanted to dance with her. In this way, he left the arena of the rasa dance and the company of all the other beautiful damsels of Vraja." Jayadeva has described in this way that Krsna left the circle of the rasa dance, taking Radha within his heart. Krsna departed in search of Radharani.

Her position is so exalted. It is said, "Lord Krsna's transcendental desires for

loving exchanges could not be satisfied even in the midst of billions of gopis. Thus he went searching after Srimati Radharani.

Just imagine how transcendentally qualified She is!" (sata-koti-gopite nahe kama nivapna).

The other gopis numbered so many, but in quality they were a little less. Their total combination could not satisfy Krsna. The qualitative difference was there. That is found.

The rupanuga-sampradaya, the followers of the line of Sri Rupa, are those who have the unique taste of service in the camp of Radharani.

In that plane, there is no entrance of any mundane exploitation or renunciation, and not even legalized sastric devotion. The highest kind of devotion is not controlled by any law. It is spontaneous and automatic. Sacrifice to the highest degree is only possible in that camp. The highest kind of divine sentiment is distributed from the camp of Srimati Radharani, and that can never be compared with any attainment hitherto known even in the eternal factor of time and space.

Then, there is another stage for which we should be prepared. Why should we try to enter into the camp of Radharani? Should we think that there, in that better atmosphere, we shall have Krsna's presence more confidentially? Should we think, "I will have contact with Krsna very intimately," should we want to enter into that camp? No - we want to avoid the connection of Krsna, but concentrate on the service of Radharani. Why? What more benefit is possible there in the service of Radharani? If we approach Krsna directly to give service to him, we shall be losers. Radharani's service to Krsna is of the highest order in every way. If we devote our energy to help Radharani, our energy will be utilized in Her service. In this way, she will serve Krsna with her service more enhanced. Then the reciprocation will pass to us through Her as our reward. That will be devotion of the highest type (mahabhava).

So, the general inclination of the sakhis, the confidential maidservants of Radharani, is not to come in direct connection with Krsna. They avoid that. But still, it is the benevolent and generous nature of Radharani to connect them with Krsna on some plea at some time or other. But their innate nature is always to avoid Krsna and concentrate on the service of Radharani. This is confirmed in the Caitanya-caritamrta (Madhya 8. 209):

radhara svarupa - krsna-prema kalpalata

sakhi-gana haya tara pallava-puspa-pata

"By nature, Srimati Radharani is just like a creeper of love of Godhead, and the gopis are the twigs, flowers and leaves of that creeper." Eternally the twigs, flowers and leaves sprout from the creeper of Srimati Radharani. She is the trunk, and they are branches.

This is their relationship.

Yet still, there is another, higher thing. We are known as rupanuga, the followers of Sri Rupa. Why? The service of Srimati Radharani eliminates everything, even Narayana, to go to Krsna. There is the Krsna of Dwaraka, the Krsna of Mathura, and the Krsna of Vrndavana. Then again in Vrndavana, where there is free mixing without hesitation in other camps, Radharani's camp is the highest. Eliminating all other camps, direct service to Radharani is considered to be the highest. Still, there is another point.

Srila Rupa Goswami - Sri Rupa Manjari

Who is Rupa? Rupa Manjari. Generally the hierarchy in the spiritual world is eternal. New recruits can occupy a particular rank of manjari, assistant, in madhurya rasa. And the leader of the manjaris is Sri Rupa Manjari. What is the special feature in the manjari camp which is not found among the sakhis, girlfriends of Krsna? First there is Radharani, then the camp of her right-hand personal attendant, Lalita. Then, under Lalita, there is Sri Rupa Manjari. What is the unique position of the followers of Sri Rupa? The new recruits can attain to that status.

Now, the privilege of this manjari class we are to conceive most respectfully and attentively.

When Radha and Govinda are in secrecy, in a private place, the sakhis, who are well-versed in the art of that kind of play, because they are a little grown-up, do not like to approach there to disturb their confidential mixing. If the more grown-up sakhis, enter there, both Radha and Govinda will feel shy. So, their presence may create some disturbance. But the younger girls can enter there, and then Radha and Govinda have no hesitation in free mixing. So, in that highest stage of the mixing of Radha Govinda, the free play of Radha-Govinda, these

manjaris, the younger girls, can have admission. But the grown-up sakhis cannot have admission there. New recruits may come up to the manjari class. And the manjaris have that sort of special advantage under the leadership of Sri Rupa Manjari. So, they get the best advantage there, the most sacred type of pure service, which is not open even to the sakhis, is open to the manjaris. That is found in Radharani's camp. So, the position of the rupanugas, the followers of Sri Rupa, is the most profitable position. That has been given out by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. That has been shown by Him, and that is fixed as the highest limit of our fortune in Krsna's concern. This is unexpectable, undesignable and beyond hope, but our prospect lies there in that subtle camp of Sri Rupa Manjari, Rupa Goswami.

So, the camp, the sampradaya of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is known as the rupanuga sampradaya. There our fate and our fortune is located.

Now we have to conduct ourselves in such a way that naturally we can connect with that highest, purest spiritual conception, from here. We must not allow ourselves to be satisfied with anything less than this highest ideal. That should be the highest goal of our life. And we must adjust our approach from our present position.

Spiritual Inheritance

We are minors. Our father has left us with so many important documents about the properties we are to inherit. As minors, we should try to find out what properties belong to us in those documents.

When we come of age, then we shall take possession of our rightful inheritance. The raganuga sastra, the scriptures of spontaneous devotional love, has been given to us, left to us, by our guru, our guardian, our father. And as we grow more and more in the spiritual line, we will have to detect what is our prospect, what is our real wealth. We must recover that. We must have that. It is there in the document. It is ours. This is our position. We are minors, but we must become majors and demand the service meant for us by our guardians.

Devotee: We are putting in our claim with you. We think that in the absence of our father, the court has appointed a guardian, in order to keep us out of mischief and also to regulate our inheritance.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: This is not mine. This is the property of my

gurudeva. And Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada gave you a clue.

He has distributed the key widely, and given a clue: "With the key come and open the iron chest and find out what valuable ornaments and gems are within the chest." Of course, no one will understand us when we say such things. Who will come to appreciate? They'll say, "Oh, this is all the product of a disorganized brain. These people are trying to take electricity from the sky, leaving aside this concrete earth. They are like the cataka bird." Rupa Goswami says that there is a class of bird known as cataka, who never take a drop of water from the earth. Their nature is that whenever they want a drop of water, they always cast their eyes to the clouds. "One drop of pure water!" - that is their cry. And so they wait, with their beaks towards the sky, towards the clouds. And they never use any water from the earth. So, our line is like that. The spirit of that bird is described in the following way by Rupa Goswami:

A Drop of Your Grace

virachaya mayi dandam dina bandho dayam va gatir iha na bhavatah kacid anya mamasti

nipatatu sata-koti nirbharam va navambas

tad api kila payodah stuyate catakena

"You may punish me, O cloud, you may punish me. If a thunderbolt comes, I'll be nowhere. You can throw down thunder or you can give me water. But how much can I drink with my small beak? A flood of rain may come. O, Lord of the poor, Lord of the helpless, you can give me a drop of your devotion, or you may punish me like anything." He is always praying for water. The cloud may satisfy him immediately or by sending a thunderbolt it may finish him, and efface him from the earth. The bird has no other alternative by nature. So, he says, "My position is also like that bird. O, Krsna, you may finish me, destroy me, efface me from the world, or you may save me by only a drop of your grace. I won't search after my satisfaction in the mud. That is finished, I will never go back to search my fortune in the earth, in the mundane. I am already fixed to do or die. Either I must receive a drop of your grace, or you may finish me." In this way, Srila Rupa Goswami prays that Krsna's mercy will descend like rain from the clouds, and not only quench his thirst, but bathe him, satisfy his utmost hankering, and fulfill his innermost necessity. So, we should never search for our

fortune in the mud; we must always look to the high sky and pray for sri guru and his grace.

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